

الفُصُولُ الْعِلْمِيَّةُ وَالْأُصُولُ الْحِكْمِيَّةُ

Al-Fusul al-'Ilmiyya wal-Usul al-Hikamiyya

CATEGORIES of KNOWLEDGE & PRINCIPLE OF WISDOM

Imam al-Haddad

*al-Hadhrami, al-Shafii, al-Hussaini
May Allah, the Exalted Have Mercy Upon Him*



مَقَامُ الْإِسَامِ الْحَرَامِ

تَرْجُومَةُ
الْحَاوِي
ت: ١٥٩٤٤
بِرَبِّهِ وَبِأَمْرِ
بِأَمْرِ

AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

CATEGORIES of KNOWLEDGE & PRINCIPLE OF WISDOM

Imam 'Abdullah bin 'Alawi al-Haddad

أَحِبُّهُمْ وَأُدَارِيهِمْ وَأُوثِّرُهُمْ

I love them, I serve them, I put them before myself

بِمُهْجَتِي وَخُصُوصًا مِنْهُمْ نَفَرًا

with my life, and especially a group among them.

قَوْمٌ كِرَامُ السَّجَايَا حَيْثُمَا جَلَسُوا

Men of noble traits, who, wherever they have sat,

يَبْقَى الزَّمَانُ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ عَطْرًا

leave that place wreathed in fragrance unending

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Maqam Imam Al-Haddad

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Door Photo



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لِلإِمَامِ شَيْخِ الْإِسْلَامِ قُطْبِ الدَّعْوَةِ وَالْإِرْشَادِ
أَلْحَيْبِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَلَوِي الْحَدَّادِ
أَلْخُصْرَمِيِّ الشَّافِعِيِّ الْحُسَيْنِيِّ
رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى

Front Cover showing the restored front door entrance to
Imam al-Haddad House in Hawi Tarim Hadhramaut Yemen

Categories of Knowledge & Principle of Wisdom

By the Imam, al-Sheikh of Islam,
the Pivot of Dakwah, the Guiding Light
the Beloved Abdullah bin Alwi al-Haddad
al-Hadhrami, al-Shafii, al-Hussaini
May Allah, the Exalted have mercy upon him

An English Translation
by
Maqam Imam Alhadad

Imam Al-Haddad's manuscripts were recompiled into books by Habib Ali bin Isa bin Abdulkader Al-Haddad. They were subsequently re-edited, reprinted, translated and distributed by various inspired parties.

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Arrangement and comments

By

Abdulkader Ali Esa Alhadad

Charity of Habib Esa bin Abdulkader bin Ahmad Alhadad

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A Short Biography of Imam Al-Haddad



In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

He is Al-Imam Al-Habib Abdullah bin Alawi Bin Muhammad Al-Haddad, the famous Imam, the *Shaykh* of Islam, the foremost of the people unification, the noble descendant of the Prophet, Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, a descendant of Al-Imam Hussein, may Allah be pleased with him, the *Shaykh* Abdullah ibn Alawi Al-Haddad Al-Alawi, may Allah reward him for us with the best rewards He gives those of His people who guide us to Him.

He was born in Subair, a small suburb in Tarim, Hadhramaut, South Yemen, on the night 5 Safar 1044 after Hijrah. Tarim was already a centre of the learned *Asyraf* of the descendant of *Saiyidina* Hussein bin Ali bin Abu Talib. He grew up in an enlightened environment. He was raised and educated there, originally taught by his father, and was never seen to show the recklessness of other children. He lost his eyesight while still young and was granted the power of discernment as compensation. He gathered as he grew, the best of knowledge and spirituality, and became outstanding in knowledge, guidance, calling people to Allah, and being a shaykh in the most perfect sense of the word. He was given the title Pole of Guidance [*Qutbul Irshad*] by the greatest of the people of knowledge in his time and thereafter until today.

Some have said that there were three ranks in calling to Allah, according to whether it was done by pen, tongue or foot (travelling). All three were combined to perfection in the works of Imam Al-Haddad, may Allah shower His mercy upon him. His books are still in print in Egypt, India, Hijaz, Istanbul, and Java. His fame spread throughout the Muslim world and his writings which were clearly based on the Quran and the practices of the Prophet [*Sunnah*] were never criticized nor thought to be controversial.

His roots from the Prophet Muhammad, messenger of Allah, blessings and peace upon him, from Fatima Az-Zahraa, daughter of Muhammad and Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, Gate to (The Radiant) the City of Knowledge, may Allah be pleased with him and all his descendants.

Then on from Al-Imam Hussein > Imam Ali Zainal Abidin > Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir > Imam Jaafar As-Saadiq > Imam Ali Al-Uraidhi > Imam Muhammad An-Naqib > Isa Ar-Rumi > Ahmad Al-Muhajir illa Allah > Ubaidillah > Alawi > Muhammad > Alawi > Ali Khali' Qassam > Muhammad of Mirbat > Alawi > Abdur Rahman > Ahmad Al-Faqih > Abdullah > Muhammad > Ahmad > Abu Bakr At-Tawil > Ahmad Al-Haddad > Alawi > Muhammad > Abdullah > Ahmad > Muhammad > Alawi > Abdullah Qutbul Irshad

He earnestly sought knowledge, accompanying such scholars as:

1. al-Habib Umar bin Abdul Rahman Al-Attas
2. al-Habib Oukail bin Abdurrahman As-Saqqaf
3. al-Habib Abdurrahman bin Syaikh Aideed
4. al-Habib Sahl Bin Ahmed Bahasan Al-Hadeely Baalwi
5. as-Saeed Muhammad Bin Alwi As-Saqqaf

Amongst his students are:

1. His son, our leader al-Habib Hassan bin Abdullah Al-Haddad.
2. al-Habib Ahmad bin Zain Al-Habshee
3. al-Habib Abdurrahman bin Abdullah Bilfaqeh
4. al-Habib Muhammad bin Zain bin Semait
5. al-Habib Umar bin Zain bin Semait
6. al-Habib Umar bin Abdurrahman Al-Bar
7. al-Habib Ali bin Abdullah bin Abdurrahman As-Saqqaf
8. al-Habib Muhammad bin Umar bin Taha As-Safi As-Saqqaf and many others.

It seems as if he was selected to carry out the mission of *dakwah* for Islam and spiritual guidance using wit and wisdom. People eventually entirely attended to him and his name has become popular.

People from different fields of life benefited from his books, preaching and guidance. His mission received people's approval and love. His publications have been translated into English, Malay, French and other languages. He passed away on the evening of Tuesday, 7 *Dzulqaedah* 1132 Hijrah and was buried in a simple grave at the graveyard of Zanbal in Tarim. May Allah show mercy on him and reward him abundantly.

His publications are distinctively popular among the old and young then and till now. They include the following:

١. النَّصَائِحُ الدِّينِيَّةُ وَالْوَصَايَا الْإِيمَانِيَّةُ.

An Nasaih id-Diniyya wal Wasaya al-Imaniyyah.

1. Sincere Religious Advices and Recommendations of the Iman.

٢. الدَّعْوَةُ التَّامَّةُ وَالتَّذَكُّرَةُ الْعَامَّةُ.

Ad-Da'watut-Taammah wat-Tadhkiratul 'Aammah.

2. Perfect Summons and General Admonition.

٣. رِسَالَةُ الْمُعَاوَنَةِ وَالْمُظَاهَرَةِ وَالْمُؤَاذَرَةِ لِلرَّاعِيْنَ مِنْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي سُلُوكِ طَرِيقِ الْآخِرَةِ.

Risalatul Mu'awanah wal Muzhaharah wal Mu'azarah Lir-Raagibeen Minal Mu'mineen Fee Suluki Tariq-al-Akhirah.

3. The Book of Assistance, Support and Encouragement for Such Believers as Desire to Follow the Way of the Afterlife.

٤. الْفُصُولُ الْعِلْمِيَّةُ وَالْأُصُولُ الْحِكْمِيَّةُ.

Al-Fusul ul-Ilmiyyah wal Usul ul-Hikamiyyah.

4. Knowledge and the Principles of Wisdom.

٥. سَبِيلُ الْإِذْكَارِ وَالْإِعْتِبَارِ بِمَا يَمُرُّ بِالْإِنْسَانِ وَيَنْقَضِي لَهُ مِنَ الْأَعْمَارِ.

Sabilul-Iddhikaar wal-I'tibaar Bima Yamurru bil-Insan Wa Yanqadhee Lahu Minal A'maar.

5. The Way to Remember and Learn from the Lives of Man that Wane and Perish.

٦. رِسَالَةُ الْمُذَاكَرَةِ مَعَ الْإِخْوَانِ الْمُحِبِّينَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْخَيْرِ وَالِدِّينِ.

Risalatul Muzhaakarah Ma'al-Ikhwaanil-Muhibbeen Min Ahlil Khayr Waddeen.

6. A Discussion Among Brothers and the Loved Ones From Among the Righteous in Good Deeds and Faith.

٧. رِسَالَةُ آدَابِ سُلُوكِ الْمُرِيدِ. *Rislatu Aadaabi Suluk il-Murid.*

7. The Book of Discipline in the Path of the Seeker.

٨. كِتَابُ الْحِكَمِ. *Kitaabul Hikam.*

8. Book of Wisdom.

٩. النَّفَائِسُ الْعَلَوِيَّةُ فِي الْمَسَائِلِ الصُّوفِيَّةِ.

An-Nafaais-il Alawiyyah fil Masaail-as-Sufiyyah.

9. The Gems of the *Alawiyya* Concerning Sufism.

١٠. إِثْحَافُ السَّائِلِ بِجَوَابِ الْمَسَائِلِ.

Ithaaf is-Saail bi-Jawabil Masaail.

10. The Gifts for the Seeker Being Some Answered Questions.

١١. الْوَصَايَا النَّافِعَةُ. *Al Wasaya an-nafi'ah.*

11. Beneficial Religious Counsels.

١٢. وَسَيِّلَةُ الْعِبَادِ إِلَى زَادِ الْمَعَادِ.

Waseelatul 'Ibaad Ilaa Zaadil Ma'aad.

12. A Means for People to Provide for the Hereafter. (A Compilation of the Imam Azkaar and Awraad, including *Wird Latif*, *Wird Kabir*, *Ratib al-Shahir*, *Hizbul-Fath* and *Hizbun-Nasr* by Habib Muhamad bin Alawi Al- Haddad).

١٣. الدُّرُّ الْمَنْظُومُ لِذَوِي الْعُقُولِ وَالْفُهُومِ.

Ad-Durrul Mandhum Li zawil 'Uqul Wal Fuhum.

13. Poetic Pearls for Discerning and Understanding Minds. This is his *Diwan*, the best of his *Qaseedas*.

١٤. تَثْبِيْتُ الْقُودِ - بِذِكْرِ كَالِمِ مَجَالِسِ.

Tathbitul fu'ad bizikir kalam majilis.

14. Affirming of the Hearts - with Remembrance of the Speeches at Majlis Volume I and Volume II.

١٥. مُكَاتِّبَاتُ الْإِمَامِ الْحَدَّادِ.

Mukatibat Al-Imam Al-Haddad.

15. Correspondences of Imam Al-Haddad.

Most of Imam Al-Haddad's manuscripts were recompiled by Habib Ali bin Isa bin Abdulkader Al-Haddad, who was born in Singapore and educated in Tarim. They were subsequently re-edited, reprinted, translated and distributed by various inspired parties.

Scholars, as well as the laymen, so highly admired the works that they would read them repeatedly. These scholarly works have also been described as summary of the quintessence of Scholar Ghazali's literature and eventually indispensable as being brief, but comprehensive.

Author's Preface

وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

There is no might nor power except in Allah,
the Most High, the Supreme in glory.

سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ.

“Glory belongs to You, we have no knowledge except what You has taught us: In truth, it is You Who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom.”¹

All praise and thanks belongs to Allah! He is the Most Merciful and the Most Wise. He is the Best Creator and Provider. Whose knowledge encompasses everything in existence and takes into account of every single thing.

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ.

“Should He not know what He created? And He is the One that understands the finest mysteries and is well-acquainted with them.”²

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ. هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ
وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ.

“To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: It is He Who gives Life and Death; and He has Power over all things. He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things.”³

¹ Surah 2 Baqarah Verse 32.

² Surah 67 al Mulk Verse 14.

³ Surah 57 al Hadid Verses 2-3.

الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ.

“He is the Living, the Self-subsisting and the Eternal. His Throne does extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme.”¹

I thank Allah for that which He has taught us and for His inspiration, for that which He has caused us to say and understand, and for all the openings and graces which He has bestowed upon us.

مَا يَفْتَحِ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكُ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ.

“What Allah out of his Mercy doth bestow on mankind there is none can withhold: what He doth withhold, there is none can grant, apart from Him: and He is the Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom.”²

May Allah’s blessings and peace be upon our leader and master Muhammad, whom He sent as a mercy to all the worlds and designated the seal of the prophets, and made him the master of the messengers, and upon his family, his companions and those who excel in following their path until the Day of Reckoning.

Thereafter, we have recorded here several chapters of knowledge and foundations of wisdom. They comprise thoughts which came to mind during the course of mutual reminding, reflection, and meditation, which scholars, worshippers, and travelers on the path often need. We have not arranged them in the pattern common to such books, that is, in a particular sequence according to the relationship between them so that each would complement the preceding one.

The reason for this is that they came to mind on various occasions during teaching sessions and discussions that touched on numerous subject, some quite remote from the others. This led to each chapter being almost totally independent of the others, the exceptions being few.

The chapters cover a broad range of subjects and contain

¹ Part of Surah 2 al Baqarah Verse 255.

² Surah 35 Faatir Verse 2.

concise wisdom. Should a scholar of broad knowledge wish to elaborate on these and transform each chapter into a full book, it would be an easy task, as will be seen clearly by those endowed with knowledge and perspicacity, and those possessed of hearts and secrets are those whom Allah has given wisdom.

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ.

“He grant wisdom to whom He please, and he to whom wisdom is granted receive indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding.”¹

When we began to record these chapters, our intention was not to collect them until they had reached forty chapters. A long period has since elapsed, and the number has yet to be reached. A sincere brother requested permission to transcript them on learning of their existence, whether it was possible to view and write it. Then he asked us to consider so with a desire to benefit and obtain benefits from it. For every action there is an intention and for every man that which he intended.

The number of chapters was initially about twenty. Then increased as Allah opens with it subjects that we pursed and integrated into their space, as Allah, the All Mighty willing.

It is now time to turn our intention into action. It is Allah whose help we seek and on Him do we depend for conveying. There is no might or power except in Him. Blessed and Exalted is He. Allah suffices us, and He is the Best of Custodians.

وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

“And my success can only come from Allah.
In Him I trust, and unto Him I look.”²

¹ Surah 2 Baqarah Verse 269.

² Surah 11 Hud Verse 88

Chapter One

Introduction

Gnostics and scholars focus mainly on making sound their faith and certitude, and strengthen them, the essence is sincere in purifying their belief in Allah's oneness [*tawhid*] from the blemishes of hidden idolatry.

They then turn their attention to perfecting virtues, such as detachment [*zuhud*], sincerity [*ikhlas*], and a clean feeling (having good thoughts) [*husnu dhun*] toward Muslims, and to counteracting blameworthy attributes, such as ostentation or showing off and vanity.

Next, they attend to the soundness of their good outward actions and to guarding themselves against falling into evil works.

Last, they attend to the good management of their daily lives and the preservation of their soundness by being scrupulous, accepting good counsel, maintaining frugality, and remaining content with little.

This is an aspect of the Gnostics, who are happy with the bare necessities and are willing to let others manage their worldly affairs for them, provided they are scrupulous and avoid injustice. So learn and understand!

As for the unaware, negligence and the confused, they attend mainly to their worldly affairs and their physical pleasures and appetites, such as food, fine clothes, marriage, amassing wealth and so on. When a few of them grow a little more aware and farsighted, they begin to pay attention to the soundness of their outward actions, such as their devotional rites of worship.

They may then move on to attending to their inward attributes, and last of all to the strengthening of their faith. This is the reverse of the order of priorities recognized by the people of gnosis and realization.

Reflect and meditate on this and you will find it clear!

وَاللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ أَعْلَمُ.

And Glory be to Allah who knows best.

Chapter Two

Gnostics and the Fools

Had all people been equally intent on understanding the intellectual and factual realities of faith, they would have attended wholly and sincerely to their Hereafter. They would have shunned the world and reduced their involvement with it strictly to its necessity, which would have led to its (worldly affairs) destruction and the impairment of all its affairs.

But the divine will, the pre-existing decree, is that the world should prosper until its appointed time, when Allah's decree for the world will cause it to be ruined and annihilated. Since this is the case, the profound wisdom has required that most people remain unaware of the realities of things and to steer a course away from them. This leads them to build for the world, attend to it, and accumulate its vanities; they thus turn away from the Hereafter and forget about it.

A warning about all this comes in the form of a hadith narrating him, may Allah's blessing and peace be upon him,

الدُّنْيَا دَارُ مَنْ لَا دَارَ لَهُ، وَمَالُ مَنْ لَا مَالَ لَهُ، وَلَهَا يَجْمَعُ مَنْ لَا عَقْلَ لَهُ

“This world is home for those who is without a home and the wealth is for those who is without wealth it is amassed by those who are lacks understanding of it”.

Hasan al-Basri, may Allah have mercy on him, said, “Were it not for the fools, the world would not have prospered.”

Another of our virtuous predecessors, may Allah have mercy on them all, said, “The son of Adam was created a fool; were it not for that, he would never have been contented with only this life.” Divine mercy singles out a few servants for penetrating awareness and remarkable acuity and insight regarding the realities of things. They are the ones who realize those truths and, as a consequence, entirely shun the fleeting world and concentrate on Allah and the Hereafter. These are rare individuals. There are a few in every time and place. Reflect and meditate on this fact as it deserves, for it is precious. And underneath it are matters yet more precious than treasures!

وَاللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ أَعْلَمُ.

And Glory be to Allah who knows best.

Chapter Three

Good and Evil Times

There is no different in old or present times, these have always included good and evil time, virtuous people and villains, and doers of good and workers of corruption. When at a given time virtue, goodness, loyalty, and righteous behavior are manifest and predominate, and corruption, error, and their folk are subdued and unnoticed, that time is said to be good and righteous. Such were the times of the Prophet, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, and of his rightly guided successors that came after.

When times are governed by people who are evil and corrupt, when good is scarce and the virtuous are but a few and hidden, such times are said to be evil and sedition; and are times of temptation and affliction.

Times are never completely without good or without evil. And as we have just said, they are characterized according to their predominant attribute. Our times and those immediately before them are predominantly corrupt, evil, and villainous. Good and virtue are rare, and superior and virtuous people are but a few, unnoticed, subdued, and all but vanquished.

قَالَ اللَّهُ مُسْتَغَاثُ وَهُوَ حَسْبُنَا وَعِنَّمُ الْوَكِيلُ.

For Allah's help is what we seek.

He is sufficient for us, and He is the Best of Custodians.

Chapter Four

Arrogant and Heedlessness

Arrogant and Heedless people are diverted away from the signs of Allah, and from understanding His secrets, and from witnessing His lights as Allah the Exalted says,

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلَّآةً لَا يُؤْمِنُوهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا، ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ.

“Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - them will I turn away from My signs: Even if they see all the signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of error, that is the way they will adopt. For they have rejected our signs, and failed to take warning from them.”¹

Thus does Allah, the Exalted, depict them as possessors of blameworthy attributes, such as heedlessness of His signs, from which they are diverted because of their arrogant presumptuousness and distraction. Presumptuousness and distraction are ailments of the heart that prevent it from grasping Allah’s signs until the heart is cured of them and is free of their deleterious effects. How can a arrogant man understand Allah’s signs when he is conceited and presumptuous and is unable to humble himself before the truth and the people of truth?

¹ Surah 7 *Al A’raaf* Verse 146

Thus Allah set a seal upon his heart just as the Almighty says,

الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ، كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا،
كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ قَلْبٍ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ.

“Those that dispute about the Signs of Allah without any authority that hath reached them. Grievous and odious (is such conduct) in the sight of Allah and of the Believers. Thus do Allah, seal up every heart of arrogant and obstinate Transgressors.”¹

As for the person who is heedless, his distraction turns his heart away from receiving the signs of his Lord, and he moves away from Allah. That is why Allah commanded His Prophet, upon him be peace, to turn away from such people. Thus the Almighty says,

فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَن تَوَلَّىٰ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا.

“Therefore, shun those who turn away from Our Message and desire nothing but the life of this world.”²

وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا.

“Do not obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds.”³

So be on close guard against presumptuousness and arrogance, for this was the ailment that afflicted Satan [*Iblis*] such as prevented him from obeying the command of Allah the Exalted, to prostrate himself before Adam, upon him be peace. He balked and was arrogant, and thus he deserved degradation, expulsion and deprived from the mercy of Allah the Exalted, for his arrogance and shameful disobedience and thus everlasting wretchedness. We ask Allah the Exalted to relieve us from all afflictions!

One should also be on close guard against forgetting Allah the Exalted and neglecting to keep remembrance of Him and the Hereafter constantly in our hearts. For heedlessness is a major cause

¹ Surah 40 *Ghaafir* Verse 35

² Surah 53 *AnNajm* Verse 29

³ Surah 18 *Al-Kahf* Verse 28

of ruin; it brings on all kinds of evils and afflictions in both this world and the next, Allah the Exalted says,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ. أُولَئِكَ مَاوَاهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ.

“Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present, and those who heed not Our Signs, their abode is the Fire, because of the (evil) they earned.”¹

And the Exalted says,

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ.

“They know but the outward appearance in the life of this world: but of the End of things they are heedless.”²

Look how Allah the Exalted first negated their possession of knowledge, then ascribed outward worldly knowledge to them, and concluded by depicting them as heedless of the Hereafter. So understand and reflect!

وَاللَّهُ الْمُوفِّقُ لَا رَبَّ غَيْرُهُ.

Allah grants success.
There is no Lord but Him.

¹ Surah 10 *Yunus* Verse 7-8

² Surah 30 *Ar Rum* Verse 7

Chapter Five

Watching Others

A man of reason and virtue should not, in these times, attempt to grasp other people's expectations and conform to them when this may result in his abandoning of things that are good for his heart or abandoning that in which he can find joy and peace of mind. Watching others and being wary of them is a tiresome effort that yields no benefit. People are preoccupied with themselves, and both their inward and outward selves are deeply committed to their worldly affairs; they are without discernment, which is obvious to anyone who gives the matter any thought. Being constantly conscious and wary of others is something that people possessed of resolution and determination disapprove of. How excellent is the saying of the poet:

He who watches others dies of grief,
While all true pleasures belong to the bold.

Watching others may have had some benefits in the past when people were more discerning and had the time to ponder and reflect on what others did. Due to people's total commitment [to worldly affairs] and loss of discernment, the benefits have now dwindled and have largely disappeared. A pious man of reason should therefore strive only for the good pleasure of Allah, his own salvation, and a goodly state in the Hereafter. He is free to pursue whatever brings tranquility to his heart and joy to his mind, as long as it is contrary to sin and base behavior. In doing so, he should pay no attention to others, given that people are preoccupied only with themselves. Let him better attend to himself, which will render this world and the next good for him. Reflect on this and be guided! May Allah take over your guidance!

Chapter Six

Four Kinds of People

People of this world are of four kinds. Upon these people's virtue and righteousness the world's proper working depends.

The first is the righteous worshipper, the ascetic who abstention from all forms of indulgence, who has cognition of Allah, the Exalted and a profound and penetrating view of religion.

The second is the scholar of religious sciences [*syariah*] well versed in the knowledge of the Book [*Quran*] and Hadith [*Sunna*] who practices what he knows, teaches it to others, is of good counsel, enjoins good, forbids evil, does not compromise in matters of religion, and fears no blame.

The third is the ruler or someone in authority who is just and equitable, whose outward conduct and inner self are good, and whose policies show rectitude.

The fourth is the virtuous man of wealth, whose fortune is large, licit, and spent in good ways. He uses his wealth to comfort the weak and the destitute and to fulfill the needs of the indigent. He accumulates wealth only for this purpose, for the goodness and nobility of such behavior.

The opposite of each of these four men are others who resemble them outwardly but differ in meaning and in reality.

As opposed to the righteous worshipper is the confused deceitful mystic [*sufi*];

And opposed to the scholar who practices what he knows is the depraved compromising scholar;

And opposed to the just ruler or authority is the tyrant of iniquitous conduct whose policies and management are evil and unjust.

And opposed to the wealthy man of virtue is the inequitable rich man who accumulates wealth illicitly, withholding it when it should be spent and spending it when he should not.

The latter four characters are the cause of the world's corruption and instability, the confusion in people's affairs, and their abandoning of the right ways.

Nevertheless, everything is from Allah. In His Hand is the dominion of all things. Transcendent is Allah, the One, the Invincible, the King, the Bestower, He provides the means for that which He wills, the way He wills.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا إِلَهُ الْمَصِيرُ

There is no God but Him;
to Him is the final return.

Chapter Seven

People And The World The Three Categories

You should know that Allah, the Exalted, to whom all praise belongs, created the world for the believers as the means to an end, namely, seeking provision for the Hereafter and practicing obedience to his Lord. But for the depraved man, the world is a place to seek lustful pleasures and satisfy appetites, heedless of his Lord and forgetful of the Hereafter. Indeed, Allah, the Exalted, has filled the world with every kind of thing that created beings may need, as well as things that are pleasurable to them; and He has created them in quantities far exceeding their need. He then gave His servants permission to take from the world as much as they need to help them on their way to the Hereafter. He warned them not to exceed the limits of their needs, and encouraged them to forsake the world and not choose it over the Hereafter. People were then separated into different categories.

Amongst them, are those who confine themselves to even less than their actual needs, being firm and cautious! When things that they neither wished for nor did anything to obtain come to them in excess of their needs, they give of them to others who either deserve it or ask for them. From amongst this group were the prophets of Allah and His messengers, may the best of blessings and peace be upon them, and their heirs among the righteous [*siddiqun*], the firmly established scholars and the virtuous servants of Allah. Also in this group are those ascetic who renounces this world altogether. Those mentioned first, however, are superior, for they neither flee the world nor desire it.

They dispose of what comes to them according to the good pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, and His commands. However, the first category of this group is sounder and superior to all others.

A second category comprises those people who take from the world according to their needs; they weigh it well and refrain from interpretations and the pursuit of special dispensations.

A third category is made up of those who take from the world more than their need. These are further sub-divided into many categorizes. There are some that take more than their needs to fulfill their good intentions and make it to benefit by doing good service at their own time. Then there are some that complete their intentions and behavior uprightly. Others, however, become confused and fall into danger. There are some that take more than they need and enjoy it, but remain within the permissible of the Law [Syariah]. They acknowledge that men who disavow the world are better than they are and that their own state falls short of those who are of high spiritual ranking and noble stations. For those people, mercy is to be hoped for them.

And there are others, however, that take more from this world more than they need for pleasure, enjoyment, and luxury diligently seeking more of such things; they are inattentive and mix the licit with the illicit. They deceive themselves about Allah, the Exalted. Some, out of presumptuousness and ignorance of Allah, prefer their own state to that of the ascetic renouncers. While others claim that in their excesses and luxury, they only fulfill their needs and take the bare necessities. Still others claim that they acquire worldly things and accumulate and keep them for the purpose of comforting others and spending wealth in beneficial ways; but the truth is far removed from this. Their actions and deeds bear witness to the contrary, and so do their Lord, their guardian angels, and the virtuous servants of Allah who witness their wicked behavior and deeds, vile choices, false claims, and self-deceit regarding their Lord.

We ask Allah the Exalted that He free us from self-deceit false pretenses, and all other afflictions and disgraces. And we ask Him to lower upon us and upon all Muslims His gracious shields of protection.

Chapter Eight

The Poor: Praiseworthy and Blameworthy

A poor man is one who, when seeking to fulfill only his bare needs in this life, finds that what is apportioned to him is less than sufficient. He does not belong to the ascetics. If he strives for his needs and is scrupulous, God-fearing, patient, and is content with whatever is apportioned to him, he is said to be a patient poor man, and his poverty is praiseworthy. There are Quranic verses and other sayings to this effect, among which is the Prophet's statement may blessings and peace be upon him,

الْفُقَرَاءُ الصُّبْرُ جُلَسَاءُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

“Poor people who have patience shall be the companions of Allah, the Exalted, on the Day of Resurrection.”

But if in seeking his needs from the world, he loses his scruples and his fear of Allah, neglects his duties to Allah the Exalted becomes impatient and dissatisfied with what Allah allots him, and then becomes anguished, vexed, angry, and envious of those people of this world who are enjoying it, he is said to be blameworthy. His kind of poverty is probably that which was meant when the Prophet may blessings and peace be upon him, said,

“Poverty comes close to disbelief.” كَادَ الْفُقْرُ أَنْ يَكُونَ كُفْرًا.

This is also of which the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him asked Allah protection. On the rare occasions when scholars spoke against poverty, it was to the latter kind that they referred.

وَاللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ

Allah and His Messenger know best.

Chapter Nine

No Relaxation In This World

There can be no relaxation at all in this world for a sane believer endowed with intelligent. Whenever he finds such relaxation, this is always accompanied by heedlessness of his Lord and of his appointed time of death. A fool, however, may find relaxation in the world, for as a fool, he is unaware of problems or of disturbing things, whether actual or expected. Saying that no repose exists in the world and that man seeks in the world that which was never part of it, this refers to total untroubled repose for people with perspicacity and intelligence. This is evident. As for the fool and the mindless, they may find relaxation. This is why it was said, “Those who relax do not have a mind.” It was something akin to this that al-Mutanabbi alluded to when he said:

Untroubled is the life of one who is ignorant or heedless
of what has elapsed and what remains;
and of one who deludes his soul of reality
and leads it to seek the impossible that it craves.

He also said,

By his intelligence does a man see hardship in bliss,
while the ignorant sees nothing in wretchedness but bliss.

وَاللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَعْلَمُ.

And Allah the Exalted knows best.

Chapter Ten

Presence or Absence of *Taqwa* and *Ihsan*

You should know that the different situations and conditions that befall man, are to be perceived and accepted as good in the presence of being mindful of one's duty to Allah, to fear Him [*taqwa*] and demonstrating excellence in worship [*ihsan*] such as in situations of poverty or wealth, health or sickness, eminence or lowliness, obscurity or fame and others.

Similarly, situations which are abhorred and despised can befall man and alternatively be received with unacceptance, hurt and outrage.

The explanation of this is as follows:

When a man of *taqwa* and good conduct is stricken with poverty, his state with Allah will be one of acceptance, contentment, patience, conscientious, being independent of others, and of many other noble attributes. His share of Allah's graces will be to receive His good pleasure, gain nearness to Allah, supported through the bestowment of patience and assistance and other divine graces. In his dealings with people, he will keep his situation concealed and appear normal. Others will praise him in his poverty and say that Allah is leading him on the same path as the best, selected and most loyal of His friends [*awliyah*] and the noble servants of Allah.

That same poverty, when it befalls some of the ill-behaved and corrupt men, will cause distress, anger, envy, and covetousness towards others. His share from Allah will be of wrath and aversion, and there will be no assistance with patience and support. He will be

despised among people for his neediness and be scorned for his inability to attend to his needs and not able to find a way to remove what has befallen him and attain wellbeing. They will say that Allah, the Exalted, has punished him with poverty because of his lack of religion [*deen*] and virtue.

Whenever, a man of good conduct and *taqwa*, to whom Allah, the Exalted, gives wealth and affluence, he will be thankful and appreciative of His bounty. He will use it in obedience, spend it carrying out good deeds, and help those both who are close and distant to him.

He will receive Allah's pleasure and love, and be strengthened with more affluence and ease. People will praise him for his good works and pray for an increase in his affluence and ease for him and for other blessings as well.

On the other hand, an ill-behaved corrupt man who has wealth and affluence will be constantly engaged in accumulating and keeping his wealth avariciously to himself. He will lack the conscience and display extreme miserliness and stinginess as well demonstrate a lack of piety and greed and other similar negative traits. He will suffer from Allah's wrath and displeasure; people will censure him for abstaining from good deeds and for his disloyalty and injustice, lack of goodness and other negative traits.

A man of *taqwa* and excellent conduct, when in good health and safety in comfort will be thankful and strive hard to please Allah, the Exalted, and to use his good health and strength in obeying Him. He will receive His good pleasure and be honored. People will praise him for his good deeds, determination, and earnestness in obedience.

Whenever sickness and poor health befall him, he will accept it, show patience and submission to Allah's will, be content with it, and refrain from impatience, angst, and from lamenting to others. He will receive Allah's good pleasure, solicitude, and assistance, and will be strengthened with relief, tranquility and the like of it.

People will praise him and say that Allah, the Exalted, allowed this illness to afflict him in order to cleanse him of [*kafara*] his sins,

increase his good deeds, and raise his rank.

Whenever, an ill-behaved corrupt man is healthy and enjoys well-being, he is ungrateful. He transgresses, neglects doing acts of obedience, and is eager to use his strength and vigor in disobedience and sinful ways. He receives Allah's wrath and be distant from Allah. People will censure him for his transgressions and for his eagerness to receive Allah's wrath. When he becomes ill or is afflicted in any other way, he becomes angry, fretful, and impatient; he is upset with Allah's decrees and exhibits other blameworthy traits. He will be met with aversion and repudiation from Allah, the Exalted. People will criticize him and say that Allah has punished him with illness and afflictions for his transgressions, immorality, and numerous sins.

Based on this example, observe and reflect on how conditions as honor and abasement, obscurity and renown, distress and affluence, and other conditions which can appear in the lives of mankind. You should know and be aware that being mindful of one's duty to Allah and being fearful of Allah [*taqwa*] and showing excellence of behavior [*ihsan*] will render any of these conditions beautiful, good, and upright, whereas corruption and evil conduct will render them ugly and degrading, and expose such people to censure from others and wrath and aversion from Allah Himself.

Reflect and meditate on this matter well. It includes subtle knowledge and provides answers to challenging situations. Although we could have elaborated at length, it is noteworthy that the little we have presented so far is sufficient for the reflective and mindful reader.

وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

And Allah has knowledge of all things.¹

¹ Surah 2 al Baqara end of Verse 282.

Chapter Eleven

Excellence in Action

People of realization, gnosis, clear vision, and certitude give precedence to excellence [*ihsan*] in action over the act itself. For the outward form of acts, whether ritual prayer, fasting, reciting the holy Quran or invocation of Allah, will be nothing but hardship and toil of no benefit in the absence of thoroughness and excellence in performance, perfection of the inner dimensions, reverence before Allah, humility, submission, attention, and the courtesy of behavior that befits that holy, sublime, and august presence of Allah. It is to this that the Prophet, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, referred to when he said,

كَمْ مِنْ قَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ قِيَامِهِ إِلَّا السَّهَرُ وَالتَّعَبُ. وَكَمْ مِنْ صَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ صِيَامِهِ إِلَّا الْجُوعُ وَالْعَطَشُ.

“How many men spends the night in Prayer and receives nothing for his vigils but sleeplessness and fatigue?” “And many men fasts and receives nothing for his fasting but hunger and thirst.”

And Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be ennobled him, said, “There is no benefit in a recitation unaccompanied by reflection.”

Some of those who outwardly perform such deeds, but without excellence, become weary and may fall into sin, even after they expend much effort. This may happen to those who are showing off and to others who are less thorough than they ought to be during their recitations, bowings, and prostrations. Their devotions are a nullity and will bring only lassitude, and because of this, they will have

sinned. Therefore, when doing deeds be thorough and give every single component of your act its due with regard to Allah, and the outward injunctions. Be present with Allah, courteous and mind your manners before Him. A few deeds performed with excellence will thus be better and purer in Allah's sight than a great many performed improperly and without excellence. You should know this and act on it! And may Allah guide you!

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى كَتَبَ الْإِحْسَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، فَإِذَا قَتَلْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الْقِتْلَةَ، وَإِذَا ذَبَحْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الذَّبْحَةَ.

“Indeed Allah, the Exalted has decreed that there must be excellence in every act. If you kill, kill in excellence and if you slaughter, conduct the slaughter excellence.”

So reflect, and understand his words, may blessings and peace be upon him, which shows that Allah has decreed that each act must be performed with excellence, and you will know that this command covers every aspect in life. Thereafter excellence differs in different situations and/or the deeds itself. When excellence is taken out of them, they either become bad and unsightly or simply mediocre and lacking in essence.

Chapter Twelve

Excellence in Abstaining

As it is incumbent upon you to excel in everything that you do for the sake of Allah, such as good deeds, devotions and actions that brings you closer to Allah, it is likewise incumbent upon you to excel in abstaining what Allah has decreed such as evil deeds, the forbidden and the doubtful actions, and from cravings of the inner desires.

The meaning of excellence in abstaining in such situations is to refrain from such actions out of sincerity towards Allah, the Glorious Supreme, and with reverence towards Him, modesty with Him and out of fear and awe for Him. And not out of shame of the created man or showing off to them or fear of people. You must also add to your outward abstention the inner abstention which is abstaining from thinking about, liking, or wishing for such things.

Whilst excellence in abstention is also to avoid situations in which one may lapse and to avoid the company of such kind of people who are likely to drag one along with them. You should know this well!

وَبِاللّٰهِ سُبْحَانَهُ التَّوْفِيقُ

For all success is from Allah the Glorious.

Chapter Thirteen

Beneficial, Neutral, And Harmful Knowledge

There are a great many sciences, not all of which are beneficial or of importance to everyone. Some may be beneficial or important for some people but not for others; some may be so at certain times but not at others; and some may be so in certain circumstances but not in others. Others may be harmful and devoid of benefit, while still others may be trivial and of no consequence. Some of this was mentioned by Imam al-Ghazali, may Allah's mercy be upon him, in the chapter on "Knowledge" in his book 'The Revival' [*ihya*]. If such is the case, a man of intelligence must then occupy himself only with the important and beneficial sciences. He must, first of all, find those that are of importance and benefit to him personally; then, if he is qualified and has the time, he should find those that are important and of benefit to others. Life is short, time is precious, death is near, and the distance to travel is great, while the moment of standing before Allah, the Exalted, to account for everything, however, seemingly insignificant, is daunting and difficult.

Observe in everyday life how a given person is preoccupied with what he considers most important and beneficial to himself, while he hardly ever thinks about what preoccupies others. If this is what people do in their daily lives for this world, how can they avoid doing the same for matters concerning religious matters of the Hereafter?

Although a man who gives priority in the world to the affairs of others over his own may be praised for it, this is not so in religious matters, where the opposite is the case.

Chapter Fourteen

The Priorities of Knowledge

If you wish to know which sciences and acts are the most important and beneficial for you, imagine that you are to die the next day and return to Allah, the Exalted, and you are standing before Him and be asked to account for your knowledge, behavior, and all your affairs and states, subsequently to be taken to either the Garden or the Fire. What you see there as most important and useful to you is precisely what you must *now* give priority and attachment to; whereas what you find useless, unimportant, frivolous, or simply of no great necessity is what you must neither pursue nor occupy yourself with in this life. Reflect and meditate on this matter well; it is of tremendous benefit to those who have discernment and are concerned about their appointed time, their return to Allah the Exalted, their salvation, and success in the Hereafter,

وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ.

“the Hereafter which is better and more enduring.”¹

وَالْتَوْفِيقُ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ وَالْفَضْلُ لَهُ،

Success is in the Hand of Allah, to whom belong all graces,

سُبْحَانَهُ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ،

For He bestows them upon His servant whomever He wills;

وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ.

And Allah’s graces are immense!

¹ Surah 87 Al Ala Verse 17

Chapter Fifteen

The Most Beneficial of Knowledge

The sciences that are most comprehensive, beneficial, clear, and authentic are the ones that are nearest to and most resemble those found and frequently indicated in the Book of Allah the Exalted, [Al'Quran], and the practices [Sunna] of His Messenger, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him. These knowledges are frequently cited and replicated in them the *Quran* and *Sunna*. These knowledges include the knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, His Attributes, Names, and Acts. They also include the knowledge of the qualities and behavior that lead to His proximity, and the qualities and behavior that lead to being remoteness from Him. They include knowledge of His injunctions and prohibitions, the appointed time, the ultimate return to Allah, the Exalted, and what occurs therein, the description of the abode of the joyful, which is the Garden, and the habitation of the wretched, the Fire. These knowledge, their meaning and very essence comprise the foundation of all other knowledge. Studying them increases faith and certitude in Allah, His Messenger, and the Last Day. It encourages obedience, devotion to Allah the Exalted, whilst abstention from all sins and other blameworthy things that attract Glory and Exalted is He's wrath. It also leads to keeping one's hopes short, preparing for death, to a thorough gathering of provision for the appointed time, yearning to meet Allah, the Exalted, renouncing the world and desiring the Hereafter, and all other noble qualities and forms of righteous conduct, which belong to Prophets' of Allah [*Nabi*] and Friends of Allah [*Wali Allah*].

Should you review the writings of the leading religious authorities, you will find none more comprehensive in these matters than the books of the Proof of Islam, Imam al-Ghazali, may Allah's mercy be upon him, examples of these are 'The Revival of Religious Sciences' [*Ihya Ulumiddin*], Forty Fundamental of Religion [*Al'Arbain fi usul addin*], Methodology for the Worshipers [*Minhaj al-'Abidin*] and Beginning of Guidance [*Bidayat al-hidayah*]

This is known to all people who are true and fair, clear sighted in religious matters, and have given the matter serious reflection and consideration. It is denied only by the dull and ignorant people or by those who deceive themselves and forget their appointed time.

وَاللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِفَضْلِهِ يُلْهِمُنَا،

May Allah, the Exalted, inspire us, through His graciousness,

رُشِدَنَا وَيُعِيدُنَا مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا،

Guide and protect us from the evil that lies in ourselves
and in the wrong in our deeds.

وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

Power and might are only with Allah.

Chapter Sixteen

How to Choose Knowledge

Some seekers of the Real, traveling on the way to Allah, the Exalted, look at the great number of knowledge and deeds, and the multitude of paths to Allah the Exalted. And they are at a loss as to which one they should take. Here they stop, perplexed. Now, if such a man is under the caring gaze of a teacher [*sheikh*] who has knowledge, gnosis, and realization, it is incumbent upon him to accept whatever, knowledge, deeds and action, state, or way, whether religious or worldly, that his teacher may indicate and specify for him; this will suffice to fulfill his needs. If he has no teacher, or if his teacher does not fulfill the conditions we have just mentioned, then let him know first of all, that some knowledge, deeds and actions are obligatory and incumbent upon all. These are the sciences of Faith [*Iman*], which safeguards one's beliefs and of *Islam*, such as Purification [*Thahara*], the Prayer [*Salat*] and Fasting [*Saum*]. One must know and practice these regardless of one's particular circumstances. When proficiency in these two sciences or knowledge is attained, a man may then choose the deeds, knowledge and states that he feels are best suited to him, most beneficial to his heart, and nearest to the good pleasure of his Lord. If he sincerely desires and seeks Allah, the Exalted and His path, then these will not remain hidden from him.

At this point there will be great differences between different travelers and seekers of the Real Truth. Some sciences of knowledge will suit some of them but not others; and the same applies to actions

and deeds. Some seekers, for instance, benefit from isolation, which improves their states, while for others only mixing with people is suitable. Some men benefit only from divesting themselves of means, others only from using them. The same applies to traveling or remaining in the same place, and to other contrasting states and situations.

A traveler who takes what he feels is best suited to him and most conducive to the good pleasure and proximity of his Lord should neither deny nor be hostile to anything that differs from his own circumstances and the path he is traveling, so long as these different circumstances and paths are legally acceptable and their authenticity confirmed by the Book of Allah, the Exalted and the practices [*Sunna*] of His Messenger, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him and his family. For Allah, Glorified and Exalted is He, to whom all praise belongs, created for each science people who learn and practice it, for each path people who travel it, and for each station and state people who dwell in them, so that each has what suits him and nothing else. And Allah would accept nothing else from them. Secrets and wisdom reside in this, the explanation of which would be too lengthy. They are difficult to grasp, except for those who possess clear vision and hearts, see by the Light of Allah, the Exalted, are well versed in knowledge, and to whom Allah the Exalted reveals mysteries from His presence.

When he looks into sciences of knowledge, deeds, paths, and states other than his own, a traveler must also reflect: if he finds his heart uncollected and his traveling disturbed, then he must refrain from their investigation and steer a new course. If, on the other hand, he finds that he is not losing his heart's collectedness and remains undisturbed, then it is harmless for him to look in to such matters.

Let him know that there are many sciences, deeds, and paths, and that these are in a general way suitable for all people. When it comes down to details, however, particular people may or may not benefit. Some people may even be harmed by particular sciences, acts, or paths. They can be likened to a table laden with food from which each guest chooses what suits and pleases him best and leaves other things that may be suitable or pleasing to others. They may also be

likened to the marketplace where there are many different kinds of goods. Each person enters the market to find what suits him and fulfills his own particular needs, leaving everything else to the others. It is not for him to deny or be annoyed by the large number of articles in the market because he has neither need nor desire for them. He is not the prototype of all humanity, such that no one should desire anything that he himself does not desire. Now that you have grasped the meaning of the table and the market and the multiplicity of foods and goods, and that they are on offer for each man to take whatever he wishes or feels is best for him, know that in this regard people are divided into four groups.

The first group comprises of those who behold the multiplicity of foods and goods, but simply take what suits them and are neither desirous of nor bothered by the rest. They are reasonable, superior, and farsighted people.

The second group comprises of those who take what is of benefit to them, but detest all other things and think that nobody can possibly desire them; there is stupidity and shortsightedness in this.

The third group is made up of those who desire everything they see whether suitable and beneficial to them or not. As a result, they may want what is of no use to them, or they may desire one thing sometime and then something else at another time. In this, too, there is stupidity, idle curiosity and a lack of insight.

Those of the fourth group, when they see the number of different foods and goods, they stop and are perplexed. They are unable to decide what to desire or what to take. You see them bewildered and baffled.

These conditions may occur to any of those people who study the different sciences, acts, paths, and states. You may see one of them desiring everything, another perplexed and unable to decide what to do, and yet another holding firmly to something that is of benefit to him but exhibiting revulsion and antagonism for everything else. In all these there is imperfection, lack of insight, and shortsightedness.

So be alert and understand that what we have just said is

important and of great moment. Some of these conditions were obtained by my teacher, Sheikh Abu'l-Hasan al-Shadhili, may Allah have mercy on him, at the outset of his wayfaring. He hesitated much between studying the sciences and devoting himself to acts of worship and devotions. He remained this way for a considerable time until he visited one of his Guiding Teacher [*sheikh*] who helped him overcome his indecision. This story is well-known.

A somewhat similar circumstance befell the venerable Sheikh Abdallah ibn Asad al-Yafi'i, may Allah may mercy on him who related it as follows,

“As I was hesitating whether to engage in studies or devote myself totally to worshipping and dedicating myself to Allah I happened to pick up a book and found in it a piece of paper which did not belong there and which I had never seen before, for I often read that book.”

On that piece of paper was this verse,

كُنْ عَنْ هُمُومِكَ مُعْرِضًا وَكِلِ الْأُمُورَ إِلَى الْقَضَا

Turn away from your worries and leave everything to destiny.

Such things tend to occur to people at the beginning of their spiritual journeys and to travelers at the outset of their paths. I once visited the gnostic Sayyid AbdurRahman ibn Sheikh Aidid Alawi, and he informed me that he had received a letter from the sufi Sayyid Abdallah ibn Muhammad Alawi who lives in the Noble city of Madinah. In that letter, he complained that the study of books had become too preoccupying and difficult for him. Sayyid AbdurRahman then asked me what he should write to him. I said, “You know better.” And he said, “My own opinion is to ask him to abandon the study of books and refrain from too much reading.” It immediately occurred to me that what Sayyid Abdallah ibn Muhammad had complained about was what had happened to him when he studied the books and saw the multitude of paths and the different conditions within each. This had led him into the kind of perplexity and indecisiveness that we were just discussing. Actually, we had met with Sayyid Abdallah when we visited the Noble city of Madinah to visit the Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s blessings and peace be on him and his family.

We saw Sayyid Abdallah and sat in his company [*majlis*] many times, benefited from him, and found him to be a virtuous and superior *sayyid* whose state was that of the people of contraction and anonymity.

نَفَعَ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَبِسَلَفِهِ وَسَائِرِ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ.

May Allah allow people to benefit from him,
his predecessors, and all other virtuous servants of Allah.

Chapter Seventeen

The Divine Allocation of Roles

You should know that you will often hear the people of Sufism say that a servant must be content with whatever Allah, the Exalted, has allotted him and must not seek to leave this condition by following his personal inclinations or the whims of his self. The reason behind this is that the Exalted Allah's choice for His servant is better and more thorough than the servant's, and His management is gentler and more perfect, because Allah the Exalted has more knowledge, wisdom, gentleness, and mercy. Ignorant and heedless people, however, may harbor illusions and become confused. They may think that to become established by Allah in any particular state is an open and unrestricted condition, a generalized, unqualified rule. We may thus hear some of them uttering horrifying things and producing baseless arguments which are of no value in proving or clarifying anything. Iniquitous and oppressive rulers will argue that Allah has established them in their methods of tyrannizing the people and corrupting the lands. Rich people and sons of this world, confused and disordered, taking money from where they should not and spending it where they should not, will produce the same argument and say that Allah has established them in this state. These are tremendous calumnies and manifest blunders. To clarify, to be able to say that Allah, Glorious and Exalted is He, has established a servant in this or that context must refer to situations and states that Allah's created as his loves and pleases as a first condition.

The second condition is that, in his particular state, the servant must be acting in obedience to Allah the Exalted and traveling the path that leads to His good pleasure.

The third condition is that he desires and seeks eagerly to rise above his state and station to other higher states and stations, in the good pleasure of Allah, whenever there is a way. He must not allow anything to hinder him from achieving this except that he reach the limit of his own capabilities, but never indolence, procrastination, or inclination to follow the self's wishes for ease and the gratification of natural appetites or inner desire.

Ponder these words and scrutinize them, for they are extremely important for safety.

Chapter Eighteen

Priorities in Actions And Intentions

A believer eager to pursue the good pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, to attain His nearness and honor in His sight, and proximity to Him in His abode, should hear of no religious virtue or otherworldly good without striving with his utmost to obtain it; and he should allow nothing to impede him, whenever this is possible.

There are meritorious acts that any individual is able to perform, such as supererogatory Prayers, Fasts, recitations of the Quran, and invocations of Allah the Exalted. There are other acts which can be performed only by a few rare individuals, while there are still others which some believers are prevented from performing because of being engaged in other meritorious activities, which in their particular cases are more important and must be given priority.

So whenever you hear of a praiseworthy or meritorious activity and find that you cannot do it, either because it is physically impossible for you or because you are engaged in other activities that are more important to you, then you must have the intention to do it the moment it becomes possible or you have the time. This good intention of yours joins you to those who actually do it, for “the intention of a believer is better than his act,” and he may achieve through good intention what he cannot achieve by action.

You may hear, for instance, of the merits of going to war

against the unbelievers¹ or more applicable today to struggle with our inner self [*jihad*], when it is effectively beyond your reach; or of the merits of charity and feeding the poor, which you may be unable to do because of your own poverty; or of the merits of establishing justice, truth, enjoining good and forbidding evil, which may be practically impossible for you because you possess no power and no jurisdiction over such matters. You must have the intention that if those good deeds were to become possible, you would perform them.

Meanwhile, do whatever you can and help the people responsible for those things by whatever means lie within your power, even if only by praying for them and exhorting them to be thorough in their religious duties towards Allah the Exalted. You may thus gain as much in the way of recompense as they do, for the Prophet said, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him,

الدَّالُّ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ كَفَاعِلِهِ

“One who shows the way to an act of goodness is equal to the one who does it.”

He, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him also said,
 مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ
 مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا.

“One who exhorts people to right guidance has a reward equal to that of all those who follow him without this diminishing their rewards in any way.”

Whatever act of goodness you are able to do, you must do. Should you have to choose, then, choose the better and more perfect act. With regard to what you are unable to do, you should have a sincere intention to do it whenever it becomes possible.

Some good deeds carry no risks whether at their beginnings or ends, for example, acquiring beneficial knowledge, multiplying supererogatory devotions, such as Prayers and Fasts, and similar acts. These you must strive for and diligently seek in any manner you can.

¹ This refers to the early Islamic period and not the current political wars.

Other good deeds carry risks and a person may fears for those who are exposed to them lest they fall into certain kinds of evil and prohibited situations. Examples of these are positions of power and positions of wealth. These should be avoided and not chased by men of intelligence and wisdom, for if chased until obtained, they may destroy them, as has happened to many people who exposed themselves to such dangers and then lost both their religion and their worldly goods and fell into a state which brought upon them the wrath of their Lord, the Exalted. It is sufficient for you, as far as these things are concerned, to have between yourself and Allah, the Exalted, the intention that if you ever become established in such a position, you will agree to assume it only for the Exalted Allah's sake and will behave according to Allah, Glorious is He, good pleasure, and do so in a way that brings you nearer to Him. Then through these good intentions, you will receive as much divine reward as those who are actually in such positions, but you will remain safe from the risks and tests. The Prophet may blessings and peace be on him, once said to one of his Companions,

لَا تَسْأَلِ الْإِمَارَةَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ أُعْطِيتَهَا عَنْ مَسْأَلَةٍ وَكَلْتَ إِلَيْهَا وَإِنْ أُعْطِيتَهَا عَنْ غَيْرِ مَسْأَلَةٍ أُعِنْتَ عَلَيْهَا.

“Do not seek governorship or position of leadership for if you are given it, having sought it, you will be left to cope with it; but if you are given it, having not sought it, you will be assisted with it.”

An example is the well-known story of Tha'labah who asked Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him and his family, to pray that Allah give him wealth so that he could give alms and do well known good deeds. It is to him that Allah's revelation refers,

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عَاهَدَ اللَّهَ لَئِنْ آتَانَا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ.

“Among them is one who swore an oath to Allah that should He give him of His bounty he would give charity.”¹

Anything carrying a risk should be avoided and not chased. So be content with safety, for it is one of the two gains. You may hear, for

¹ Surah 9 At Taubah Verse 75.

instance, of the recompense that reached those who patiently endure trials and illnesses. You may desire it and hope to win the goodness of such things, only then to be tested and find yourself unable to endure patiently. The Messenger of Allah may Allah's blessings and peace be on him and his family often encouraged and prompted people to pray for well-being. It suffices you to have the intention and sincere determination that, should Allah, the Exalted, test you, you would be patient and endure in expectation of Allah's grace. Meanwhile, pray for well-being and use it as a support in obeying Allah the Exalted and seeking the good pleasure of Glorious is He.

You are now aware that you must do everything you can in the matter of benign activities; combine as many as is possible for you, and choose the more perfect alternative whenever you have to choose. But you must also refrain from exposing yourself to anything very risky, even if good, save that which is forced on you or with which you are tested. And you must refrain from giving priority to anything save that which is the most important and beneficial to your religion, according to the rules that we have just explained. All these matters are interrelated and illuminate each other. Ponder upon them and reflect well.

أَمَدَّنَا اللَّهُ وَإِيَّاكَ بِدَوَامِ التَّوْفِيقِ،

May Allah assist you and us with permanent success,

وَهَدَانَا جَمِيعًا إِلَى سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ

and guide us all to the even way,

وَأَقْوَمَ طَرِيقٍ فِي لُطْفٍ وَعَافِيَةٍ

the straightest path, in ease and well-being!

Chapter Nineteen

The Pursuit of Worldly Pleasures

In this world, those who possess the utmost in comfort and the greatest forms of pleasures and are the most intent on pursuing them are also the most troubled, fatigued, endangered, worried, stressed, and sorrowful of all. Such is the plight of the kings and the rich. In contrast, those who possess the fewest comforts and pleasures, and are the least desirous of them, are the least troubled, fatigued, endangered, apprehensive, and aggrieved. Such are the poor and the destitute. The reason behind this is that the delights, comforts, and passions of the world are in their very essence troubling, disturbing, and stressful, since those who jostle, compete, and envy others for them are quite numerous. To pursue, enjoy, protect, and multiply these things can be extremely exhausting, hazardous, and aggrieving. The more one takes from the world and its pleasures, the more one's problems, dangers, worries, and sorrows multiply, while the less one desires and pursues the world's pleasures, the less one's problems become. One can observe how kings and wealthy people are among the most tired, stressed, aggrieved and endangered of all people. Some of them hazard their very souls and endanger their hearts in pursuing their desires and passions or having obtained them in protecting and multiplying them. This is quite evident to any intelligent observer. As for the poor and the indigent, they demand but little of the world and its passions, either by choice, as do the renouncers or by necessity, like those people who are weak and do not even entertain such ideas, let alone actively pursue them. Both have fewer worries and fewer sorrows.

You should know that those who demand from the world the

needs of only one day have fewer troubles and worries than those who demand the needs of a week, while those who seek a month's needs have fewer worries than those who seek the needs of a year. Those whose desires are confined to themselves have fewer troubles than those who desire for themselves and for others. As demands grow, so do troubles, worries and sorrows, as though the pleasures and comforts that a man finds in the world lay on one side of the scales and hardship, danger and grief on the other. They usually balance each other. There are individual differences and one side may outweigh the other a little, but not very much.

This is what happens to the two different groups in this world. As for the Hereafter, it would take too long to discuss or even simply enumerate the well-known hadiths and other sayings describing what those who run after pleasures and appetites in this world will undergo. They will be called to account and will be met with chastisement, hardship and great terror. On the other hand, the poor and the destitute have expectations of happiness, honor, success and repose. Therefore, if you desire rest in the world, relinquish your quest for rest in it!

A wise man was once asked, "To whom does the Hereafter belong?" He replied, "To those who seek it." Then he was asked, "And to whom does the world belong?" He replied, "To those who forsake it."

When Ibrahim ibn Adham, may Allah have mercy on him, saw a sorrowful *sufi*, he said to him, "Worry not nor grieve. Were kings to know what tranquility is ours they would fight us with their swords for it." The cause of his abandoning his worldly position and ephemeral kingship is that he once looked out of his palace window at midday and saw a poor man taking refuge in the shade of the palace. The man took out a flat loaf of bread and ate it, drank some water and then lay down in the shade and slept. Ibrahim liked what he had seen, envying the man for his peace of mind, so he sent someone with orders to fetch him as soon as he woke up. When the man was brought to Ibrahim, he said to him, "You ate your loaf when you were hungry and were satisfied?" The man said, "Yes!" He said, "Then you slept and were rested?" Again the man answered, "Yes!" And Ibrahim said to himself,

“If the soul can be satisfied with as little of the world as that, what have I to do with the world?”

At nightfall he left the palace and all that it contained and devoted himself entirely to Allah, the Exalted. What became of him is well-known.

You now know, from what has been said, that the comforts of this world, its pleasures and passions, are wearisome, perilous, alarming, grievous and painful. Their increase always comes with an increase of these accompanying difficulties and greater vulnerability to them. When pleasures, comforts and passions diminish, so too do weariness, peril, worry, and grief; and one is more at ease. Do not forget the sorry consequences in the life-to-come which await the pleasure-seekers; nor forget the high rank of those who forsake pleasure, those who left them either by choice or by force of circumstances. This is clear to anyone who reflects on it with an impartial mind.

Chapter Twenty

The Pairs of Opposites

There are opposites in this world: light and darkness, good and evil, beneficence and corruption, benefit and harm, and many others. People whose powers of discernment are weak may observe this and wonder, and then perhaps imagine, that had the world been made exclusively of light, goodness, and beneficence, it would have been better. They may then raise objections to the All Mighty Allah's creation of the opposite of these and go on to think that there is neither cause nor meaning behind their existence. This way of thinking is nothing but ignorance, rational inadequacy and unawareness. For Allah, Transcendent is He, to Him be praise, is the Wisest of Sovereigns; to Him belongs the absolute knowledge that encompasses all things, and He is the most able of the able, the most merciful of the merciful. It has been related through some recordings that Allah the Exalted said,

“Indeed, I am Allah, there is no God but Me; I created good and evil and for each of them I created people. Blessed are those whom I created for good and through whom I caused it to happen and woe to those whom I created for evil and through whom I brought it about; and woe also to those who ask why and how.”

For those who say why or how or if only, when they see things which they can neither understand nor perceive the wisdom within them, are the ones who dispute and raise objections to Allah's, the Exalted, management of His creation. Glory belongs to Him.

You should know that the existence of the world as it is, with its multitudes of opposing and contrasting things, is most complete and excellent and could not have been better or more wisely made, considering the reason behind it and what it was created for; so be aware of this!

The explanation of this is that the world can be imagined in four different ways:

Firstly, as it is now, that is, containing opposition;

Secondly made of pure goodness and absolute beneficence;

Thirdly, made of evil and harm exclusively; or

Fourthly, non-existent, there is no conceivable fifth condition as for non-existence, it is nothing and has no reality. As for pure goodness, had the world been that way, many beneficial things and wise arrangements would have been impeded or abolished. The world would have had half an existence and its very purpose would have been impossible to achieve. As for pure evil and harm, it would have obviously eliminated all benevolence.

You now know, from what has just been stated, that the condition in which the world was created is the best and most perfect. This is akin to the concept mentioned by Imam al-Ghazali in the “Book of *Tawhid*” in ‘The Revival’ [*ihya*], “A better world there could never have been.” This statement is sound, acceptable, and there can be no objection to it. But yes, when he went to great lengths in the exposition of this idea, verbal expression proved too limited to express the meaning as intended; then the problem arose and there was misunderstanding. The intention of the Imam was sound and the meaning he aimed at noble and subtle. However, such is the usual pattern when a scholar who is also a gnostic seeks to convey subtle meanings to those who are unable to grasp them. Matters become more obscure and problematic, and the man of knowledge becomes a target for the objections of those to whom such knowledge does not belong and who are not well-versed in it.

You should know that the existence of the world “as it is”

contains many signs indicating the names of Allah the Exalted and His attributes. This is possible only when the world is “as it is”. There are also signs referring to other-worldly matters, which is only possible with the world being “as it is”. There are also signs concerning this world which is again possible only because it is “as it is”. This is because light can be known only by the presence of its opposite, which is darkness; good can be known only by the presence of evil; and this goes for virtue and corruption, benefit and harm, health and sickness, and so on.

Be attentive to what we have explained in this chapter, for these are noble meanings and subtle truths which need to be fully explained and clarified by many words and lengthy expositions.

وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ.

Allah says the truth and He guides to the right path.

Chapter Twenty One

Gnosis¹ or Heedlessness

The noblest, most honorable, eminent, and exceptional people in both this world and the next are the people of knowledge and gnosis or knowledge of Allah [*Maqrifah*], and of obedience, submission and mindful of their duties and fear [*taqwa*] of Allah the Exalted. This is manifest and indisputable; it is clear common knowledge to both the specialists and the general public. However, because perseverance in submission and *taqwa* is hard for the soul, since this runs counter to its passions and disturbs its quest for ephemeral pleasures, most people evade them despite their awareness that obedience and *taqwa* bring dignity, honor, nobility, and high rank in both this world and the next. They are more inclined to follow their passions and their desire for pleasures, even the illicit and prohibited, despite their awareness that these things attract shame, humiliation, and degradation. For such are the soul's inclinations and men choose to submit to them and obtain immediate gratification, however villainous this may be.

You should know that the people of gnosis and submission to Allah the Exalted among His creatures are like the favorites among a king's attendants, those whom he trusts with his secrets and his treasury, who are allowed into his presence, converse with him, are his close servants, and take from this privileged presence the orders which they carry out. And who can be more esteemed and honored than those who have this privileged position near the king? To Allah belongs the highest similitude.

¹ It refers to knowledge of Spiritual Truth and in this context of Allah the Exalted.

As for people of passions of inner desires [*syawad*] distraction and sin, they are like the ones among the royal slaves who are in charge of the stables. They remove the filth and do other lowly and unclean jobs. Observe the difference between the two groups and choose the better one for yourself. You should know that Allah the Exalted promised to people of gnosis, obedience, and those who are mindful of their duties to Him [*taqwa*] honors in the Hereafter. Otherwise, the honor, elevation, dignity and majesty which He grants them in this world, both before Him and vis-a-vis His creation, would suffice them and contribute the greatest of rewards. Nevertheless He has promised to give them, in His Garden and His Abode of Honor, that which “no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no heart has ever imagined,”

Similarly, Allah, Glorious is He, has warned those who are devoted to their possessions and fall into transgressions that they will indeed be questioned, veiled, punished, and harshly tormented in the Hereafter. Otherwise, the shame, humiliation, and degradation that they suffer in this world should suffice them and constitute the greatest of penalties and punishments.

رَحِمَكَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى هَذَا الْفَصْلُ، وَأَحْسَنَ النَّظَرِ فِيهِ وَاللَّهُ الْمُؤَفَّقُ.

May Allah the Exalted bless you with a good understanding of this chapter, for Allah grants appropriately.

Chapter Twenty Two

People of this World and those of the Next

When the people of this world amongst the heedless and distracted or those who mix good with evil acts give their love to the people of the Hereafter, those who possess knowledge and practice it, who are the saints and the virtuous, when they revere them and envy their obedience and attentiveness to Allah, High and Majestic is He, they are doing well and this is a sign of their ultimate happiness and success. It may even lead them to emulate those people of virtue, tread their paths, perform the good works they do, and acquire their praiseworthy attributes. This does, in fact, frequently occur.

We have heard that a group of heedless and mixed-up people gathered one day and sent one of their ranks with twenty dirhams to buy fruits, perfume, and other things to enliven their gathering. He went to the market and found everyone crowding around a watermelon, each eager to buy it, the reason being that Bishr ibn al-Harith may Allah have mercy on him and grant people to benefit from him, had touched it with his hand. The man bought it for all the money that he carried and took it back to his companions. It had taken him long time to return, so they asked him, “You took such a long time, yet return with only this watermelon?” He replied, “This watermelon possesses something wondrous!” They asked what that might be and he said, “Bishr ibn al-Harith has touched it with his hand and I competed for it and acquired it for all our money.” They asked, “And who might this Bishr be?” “A worshipper,” he replied, “who has obeyed Allah and was honored by Him!” Hearing this they exclaimed to each other, “If the man of obedience ends up being so honored by

Allah in this world, how will it be for him in the Hereafter?” They all repented and abandoned their frivolous and futile activities. This ended the tale relating to Bishr.

Events like these are frequent occurrences for unaware and heedless people when they take to respecting and loving those possessed of *taqwa* and attentiveness to Allah.

On the other hand, when people of the Hereafter and of attentiveness give their love to the heedless and mixed-up people of the world, begin to appreciate them, find their condition pleasant, and envy their enjoyment of the world’s passions and manifold pleasures, this indicates that their power of discernment is weakening, their resolution crumbling, and that they have little or no sincerity in their traveling toward Allah the Exalted and the Hereafter. Just as this world is vile and insignificant, with all that it contains, so too is he who has desire, greed, and attachment for its passions and pleasures and is excessively concerned with acquiring and developing them. Thus when people of the Hereafter enter a state in which they envy and respect a person of that description, they may end up even lowlier than he in degree and level of ambition. On the contrary, people of religion and the Hereafter must raise their ambition, rise above seeking material security in the world and in its people, and be repelled and disgusted by all its passions and fleeting pleasures; for in reality these are but befouling, defiling dirt.

The world has been likened to a putrid carcass and to disgusting refuse, in the words of the Messenger of Allah himself, may blessings and peace be on him and on his family, and in the words of the righteous predecessors in a hadith narrated,

“The world is a putrid carcass,” الدُّنْيَا جِيفَةٌ قَذِرَةٌ.

In another narration from al-Dahhak, he, may Allah’s blessings and peace be on him, likened this to that filth which is expelled from man’s gut.

Whilst Al-Fudayl ibn ‘Iyad, may Allah have mercy on him, said, “Were I to be told, ‘Take the world; it is licit, there will be no asking to account!’ I would still be as repelled by it as any of you is

repelled by a carcass he passes by and which he fears may render foul his clothes.”

AI- Yafi'!, may Allah have mercy on him, related in one of his books the story of the vizier who once went out with a magnificent escort which so impressed a group of strangers that they kept enquiring who he was, until a woman by the roadside replied, “How long will you keep asking, “Who is this?” “Who is this?” This is a creature who has fallen from the grace of Allah watchful eye and has been afflicted by Allah the Exalted with the state which you now behold.” On hearing what she said, the vizier returned to the king and asked to be relieved of his office. Then he went to Makkah the Ennobled place as a repented man, and there he remained until he died.

It is invariable that when people of religion and the Hereafter see worldly people eager to accumulate its treasures and preoccupied with their passions and desires, they must feel sorry for them. And they pray for them with sincerity that they may be freed and saved from turning away from Allah the Exalted, that others have fallen prey to, and from their heedlessness of the Hereafter, which is their ultimate return and their appointed time. Allah forbids that the people of the Hereafter might wish to become like them! It is only so with people lacking discernment, sincerity with Allah the Exalted, true renunciation or true desire for the Hereafter, which is,

“The Hereafter is better and more enduring.”¹ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ.

He who does this is like the one who will have accepted for exchange the better and more enduring for the worst and will have failed to appreciate the value of Allah’s the Exalted gift to him². This gift is His choice that a believer will travel to Him and to the Hereafter, and His preserving him from the affliction of turning away and being forgetful of Him and of pursuing the ephemeral, lowly, valueless things of the world.

¹ Surah 87 Al ‘Ala Verse 17.

² Surah 2 Al Baqara Verse 61 - This likened to the people of Israel who asked Prophet Musa may Allah blessings be upon him who want a variety of earthly food in place what Allah provided them.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him and his family, said,

لَوْ وَزَنَتِ الدُّنْيَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ جَنَاحَ بَعُوضَةٍ مَا سَقَى كَافِرًا مِنْهَا شَرْبَةَ مَاءٍ.

“Had the world weighed in the sight of Allah as much as the wing of a fly, He would never have given a disbeliever a sip of its water!”

There are many other well-known hadiths in this regard.

وَالْتَوْفِيقُ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ،

Success is in the Hand of Allah.

وَالْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ،

The whole matter belongs to Him.

وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى.

There is no power nor might except with Allah,
Transcendent and Exalted is He.

Chapter Twenty Three

The Golden Mean

You should know that moderation and steering a middle course are required in all affairs and must be maintained. It has been handed down that “the best of things are the middle ones.” Also, “Moderation, deliberation, and graceful manners are one of twenty five parts of prophethood.” The Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah ennoble his countenance and grant him His good pleasure, said, “Keep to the middle course, for those who exceed it return to it and those who fall short of it eventually advance to and rejoin it.”

It is out of incapacity or neglect that one falls short of the middle course and moderation, while to exceed it is to be immoderate and extravagant, all of these reprehensible and repugnant reasoning and religion, also worship and the usual norm.

Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, urges mankind toward moderation and to cleaving to the middle way by categorizing these acts as the best of deeds and manners when He the Exalted says,

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا.

“Make not your hand tied to your neck, nor stretch it out to its utmost reach, such that you become blameworthy and destitute.”¹

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not wasteful but hold a just balance between those extremes.²

All praiseworthy attributes, manners and good deeds should be

¹ Surah 17 Israa Verse 29.

² Surah 25 Al Furqan Verse 67.

judged according to this rule. To go into this in detail would be too lengthy, so we will give only a few examples.

One of such is generosity, excess in spending and immoderation here it amounts to squandering and wastefulness, for Allah likes not the wasteful¹. By default, the dereliction and negligence by the scarcity, and stinginess and scrooge are remote from Allah the Exalted and from men.

Amongst, the praiseworthy manners and appreciative deeds is being courageous, whilst when immoderate, it turns into recklessness and unnecessary risk-taking; whereas when insufficient, it becomes cowardice and disgrace.

Also humility is praiseworthy, but when excessive, it turns into degradation and humiliation; and when insufficient, it turns into arrogance and frivolity.

The same applies to modesty which, when excessive, becomes effeminacy and weakness, and when insufficient becomes crudeness and impudence.

Finally, too much humor and cheerfulness leads to fatuousness and triviality, while too little leads to offensiveness and estrangement. Other traits can be weighed in the same manner. The same principle applies to sleep, food, clothes, and so on. One must always cleave to the middle way, for both extremes are blameworthy.

Now be aware that the limits of moderation may not be evident, and the middle way may prove difficult to locate, except for those who have religious insight and are well versed in knowledge and certitude. Therefore, any person who experiences problems in this area must refer to such people, and if he cannot find any of them, which frequently occurs these days, he must halt and wait until he is sure of the right thing to do. The best course of action when confusion occurs is to lean slightly on the side of excess in praiseworthy things, such as humility and liberality, and slightly on the side of frugality in habitual things such as eating, sleeping and talking, for it is in the nature of the

¹ Surah 6 Al An'am Verse 14 "for Allah love not the wasters."

lower soul to lean toward excess in habitual things and toward insufficiency and neglect in matters of religion. It is therefore wise and appropriate to go against the soul's inclination on both accounts, if, Allah, the Exalted willing.

The Proof of Islam, Imam alGhazali, may Allah have mercy on him, has given similar indications in his writings. To explain further, if a man giving charity is undecided as to whether he is being miserly or prodigal, let him go a little more toward the side of excess, for this is better than avarice. The soul is inclined to like money and to dislike parting from it; so it must always stand accused of miserliness. If a man is undecided whether he has excessive or insufficient humility, let him move a little more toward being humble, for the same reason as stated above. If on the other hand, he cannot decide whether he is taking the right amount of food, sleep, or any other habitual thing, let him move toward reduction and economy, for the soul again stands accused here, and any reduction in such things is unreservedly praiseworthy, so long as it does not affect one's mind or body adversely. Understand these things, for they are important!

You should then know, may Allah have mercy on you, that some people of virtue and Sufism have been said to do things that one may think go beyond moderation and the limits of the middle way, being overzealous in their acts of worship, whereas they forsake their habitual things to such an extent as to diminish the energy that is humanly required. If they are people of beginnings or novices, these things must be taken to indicate their resolution to discipline the soul, train it, refine its character, and reduce its lot. This can be achieved satisfactorily only by means that may resemble immoderation and overstepping the limits. For the soul is like an unruly obstinate animal that can only be tamed and trained for riding and work by reducing its fodder and imposing hard tasks on it. When it loses its willfulness and becomes compliant, then it is led back to the middle way. This is the explanation of all that has been said about such people in their early careers, and it is quite compatible with wisdom and correct management. If, on the other hand, they are those in the prime of spirituality, then these things are to be understood as the consequence of being overcome by spiritual states so that the secrets of their state

and status in deed have been overwhelmed by lights and unveilings. The servant departs at this point from the exigencies of his humanity and becomes in most respects more like the noble angels. This state is not perpetual; it remains in existence at times and not at others. One should concede to such people their states; for such states are beyond their control and should be considered norm breaking blessings [*karamat*]. An example of this is what has been related about Sheikh Sahl ibn ‘Abdallah, may Allah have mercy on him, who used to eat only once every fifteen days and not at all during Ramadan.

Another is that of Abu ‘Ubayd al-Busri, may Allah have mercy on him, who, during Ramadan, entered his house and told his wife to bolt the door and leave a small opening through which she threw him a loaf of bread every night. At the end of the month she unlocked the door only to find thirty loaves stacked in one corner. Others have been said to eat once a year, and our master, the Qutb alMuqaddam Muhammad ibn Ali Ba-Alawi, may Allah have mercy on him and grant people to benefit from him, remained four months near the end of his life with neither food nor drink. On the last day of his life they forced some food into him, and when he felt it, he opened his eyes and said something to the effect, “Have you had enough of me?” after which he passed away into the good pleasure of Allah the Exalted. There are many similar recordings about both people on the start and those at the end of their path; their explanation is as we have stated above. However, they can be understood in more ways than one, all of which are acceptable and to be conceded to them.

نَفَعَ اللَّهُ بِهِمْ

May Allah cause us to benefit from them!

Chapter Twenty Four

Gentleness

You should know that gentleness is required in all things. It is encouraged and approved by both *Sharia'* and reason. Things can be achieved through gentleness that cannot even remotely be done through severity and force. Gentleness is the attribute of the wise and the compassionate among those servants of Allah whom He has selected. Allah, the Exalted, described His Prophet, the master of mankind, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, as thus:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ.

“It was by the mercy of Allah that you were lenient with them, for had you been stern and coarse of heart they would have dispersed from around you.”¹

The Exalted say,

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ.

“Keep to forgiveness enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant ones².”

He, the Exalted says,

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا.

“And the servants of the All-Merciful are they who walk upon earth gently, and when the ignorant ones address them, they say, “Peace!”³

¹ Surah 3 Ala Imran Verse 159.

² Surah 7 Al A'raaf Verse 199.

³ Surah 25 Al Furqaan Verse 63.

The Messenger of Allah, may blessings and peace be on him and his family, said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ يُحِبُّ الرِّفْقَ فِي الْأَمْرِ كُلِّهِ.

“Allah is gentle and loves gentleness in all things.”

And, he may blessings and peace be on him, said,

مَا كَانَ الرِّفْقُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا زَانَهُ، وَلَا نُرْعَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا شَانَهُ.

“Gentleness never enters into anything without embellishing it, and it is never taken out of anything without disgracing it.”

Gentleness is to manage things with subtlety, ease, dignity and deliberation. And there is a narration that whenever he may blessings and peace be on him, was given to choose between two things but that he chose the easier, so long as it was not sinful, but when it was sinful, he was the remotest of people from it.

Those who most particularly need to use gentleness are those who occupy high positions of either religious or worldly responsibility. With it they are to treat people well and win them over, and thus become supported by the majority and gain many followers, so that people are able to take from them in abundance. In contrast, leaders who set aside gentleness and take to harshness and force can never enjoy wide support. Even when some appear to have such support, it can be no more than superficial while inwardly there will be hatred, revulsion, and feelings of oppression. Thus gentleness is entirely good, and intelligent men should apply it to all things, especially in dealing with people, first of all with one's family and servants, then with everyone else. It should never be neglected, and it always yields the required results, even if not immediately. On some rare occasions, however, gentleness may be found ineffective, especially in dealing with certain mean and ignoble natures. To treat such people with gentleness would be harmful to them; they should be treated in an apparently harsh and severe manner, but with the intention of reforming them and correcting their behavior. A certain gnostic [*ariffin*] said, “Some people are only shells devoid of reason.”

If you do not overpower them, they will overpower you.” Not

far removed from this is al-Mutanabbi, may Allah the Exalted, mercy be upon him, saying,

Generosity wins the loyalty of the generous,
but with the vile it breeds insolence.

For to place liberality where the sword should be
is as remote from excellence as the reverse.

But these are rare instances, involving deviant people of weak intelligence who have little good in them, being ignorant and foolish, with vicious natures and beast-like souls. They are the only ones to be treated harshly with the aim of reforming them and as a protection against their viciousness. In this way, one should understand why, on certain occasions and with certain people, great men of Allah are rigorous. Thus, gentleness is the essence and the rule except when it is feared that a worker of corruption may thereby step up his corruption and transgression, and it is felt that he can be stopped only by a certain amount of severity and harshness. The Messenger of Allah, may blessings and peace be on him and his family, enjoined gentleness and behaved gently in most situations. This is known to anyone familiar with his history, hadith and his pattern in teaching the ignorant and dealing with the near and far. One example of this is the well-known hadith of the bedouin who urinated in the mosque. Another is that of the other bedouin man who when given a donation by the Prophet, may blessings and peace be on him, was discontented and uttered things that he should not have said, at which the Prophet's Companions started toward him, only to be stopped by the Prophet, who then gave the man more and went on giving him until he was satisfied and spoke gracious words. The third is that of the young man who said to the Messenger of Allah, may blessings and peace be on him, "O Messenger of Allah! Grant me permission to commit adultery!" The Prophet replied, "Would you like this to happen to your daughter?" He answered, "No!" So he said, "Likewise other people do not like it to happen to their daughters." And he passed his hand over the young man's chest and prayed for him, and from then on nothing was more abhorrent to this man than adultery.

There are many other such stories that have been narrated

about him, may the blessings of Allah be on him, as well as about the leaders after him, the scholars, and the virtuous among our rightly guided predecessors and those of their successors who emulate them. So be gentle, may Allah have mercy on you, in all matters; it is a blessing and its consequences are good.

وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا

But none are granted it (goodness)
Except those who exercise patient and self-restraint,

وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ.

And none is granted it except the one who is greatly fortunate.¹

¹ Surah 41 Fussilat Verse 35.

Chapter Twenty Five

The Rights of The House of Prophecy

No person of any consequence should respect or praise an ignorant man, even if he is of noble birth and virtuous ancestry. For to respect and praise, such a person in his presence may have an adverse effect on him religiously speaking. It may deceive him concerning Allah, render him neglectful of proper behavior, and distract him from gathering provisions for the Hereafter. The one who respects and praises him will have been the cause of his temptation and illusion, and it will be as if he had tried to destroy him. He may, by this, deserve the wrath of Allah, His Messenger, and those pious primordial [*salafissoleh*] to whom this ignorant man is related and from whom he derives his nobility. How can anyone be deceived by a noble lineage when rectitude is absent? Or how can anyone depend on it when the Messenger of Allah, may blessings and peace be on him and his family, said,

يَا فَاطِمَةَ بِنْتَ مُحَمَّدٍ لَا أُغْنِي عَنْكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا

“O Fatima, daughter of Muhammad: You will not benefit anything from me against Allah!”

This is stated in an authentic hadith and also similarly saying “O people of Bani Mutalib!” or “Ya Fulan” from the relatives of the Prophet!” The harm of praising the ignorant is great and so is the sedition it causes. Once a man once extolled another in the presence of Allah’s Messenger, may blessings and peace be on him and his family, and was told,

وَلَكَ فَكَعْتٌ عَنْقَ أَخِيكَ لَوْ سَمِعَهَا مَا أَفْلَحَ.

“Woe to you! You have cut your brother’s throat; were he to hear this he would never succeed!” Al Hadith.

And the Prophet said, may blessings and peace be on him,

لَأَنْ يَمْشِيَ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَى أَخِيهِ بِسِكِّينٍ مُرْهَفٍ خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنْ أَنْ يُثْنِيَ عَلَيْهِ فِي وَجْهِهِ.

“It is better for one of you to chase his brother with a sharp knife than to praise him in his presence.”

Praise harms the self-deceiving ignorant man who lacks religious perspicacity, knowledge, and certitude, but does no harm to the scholar endowed with discernment and knowledge of his Lord and of himself. The Messenger of Allah, may blessings and peace be on him and his family, praised some of his Companions in their presence, and this only increased their knowledge, religious discernment, resolution, and eagerness in obedience and worship. A hadith states,

إِذَا مُدِّحَ الْمُؤْمِنُ رَبَّ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قَلْبِهِ.

“When the believer is praised, faith blossoms in his heart.”

However, people of discernment and good counsel are few, especially in these days, while people of ignorance and illusion are many. So, let believers beware, if they possess a fear of their Lord [taqwa] and wish to protect their religion from anything that may harm them or any of their brother Muslims. Some people, when told that such and such a person has committed transgressions or has mixed good with evil things although the person is from the House of Prophethood [*Ahlul Bayt*], say that he is one of the People of the House of the Messenger of Allah, may blessings and peace be on him and his family, and that the Prophet will intercede for them, and that perhaps their sins will cause them no harm. To say this is atrocious, and whoever utters such a thing brings harm to himself and to other ignorant people. How can one say such things when in the Lofty Book of Allah there are sufficient indications that the people of the House are rewarded doubly for their good works, but also punished doubly for their sins! This is as the Exalted say,

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَن يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُضَاعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا.

“O Consorts of the Prophet! If any of you were guilty of evident unseemly conduct, the Punishment would be doubled to her, and that is easy for Allah.”¹

Also see the next verse, referring to the double rewards for good deeds of the ladies of his house, may blessings and peace be on him and his family.

Whoever either claims or simply thinks that neglecting obedience and committing sins are not damaging to people of noble lineage and virtuous ancestry has slandered Allah and gone against the Muslim consensus. However, those who belong to the House of the Messenger of Allah may blessings and peace be on him, are nevertheless noble, and he takes particularly good care of them. He has repeatedly exhorted his nation to look after them and encouraged people to love and befriend them. And this too is ordered by Allah, the Exalted in His Book when he say,

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ.

Say O Muhammad, “No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kinsfolk.”²

Therefore, all Muslims must have love, friendship, respect, and reverence for them, within limits and avoiding excess.

Those among the People of the House who follow in the footsteps of their pious primordial ancestors and keep to their well pleasing way are leaders. People should be guided by their lights and their conduct should be emulated as was that of their well-guided forefathers from whom were the earliest leaders, such as the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, al-Hasan and al-Husain, the two descendants of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him, an example like Jafar al-Tayyar, the

¹ Surah 33 Al Ahzaab Verse 30.

² Surah 42 Ash shura Verse 23.

chief of all martyrs, Hamza, the likes of the nation's scholar Abdullah ibn Abbas, and his father Imam al-Abbas, the uncle of Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, and the like of Imam Zainal Abidin Ali, the son of al-Husain, and Imam al-Baqir and his son, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, may peace be upon them, and those who resemble them among the early members of this Pure House and those that came after them.

Those who belong to this House but do not follow the ways of their unblemished ancestors, and who, because of their ignorance, confuse things, should still be respected and revered because of their relation to the Messenger may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him. But those who are qualified must never neglect to give them good counsel and exhort them to follow their pious ancestors in knowledge, good works, correct attributes, and satisfactory conduct. They must be told that of all people, they should be particularly virtuous and that lineage on its own can be of no benefit in the absence of the fear of Allah [*taqwa*] and in the presence of eagerness for the world and neglect of obedience, thus allowing oneself to be sullied with transgression. Not only have religious leaders and scholars understood this, but some poets also. One of them said,

By your life! A man is but his religion's son,
 So never neglect *taqwa* to depend on lineage.
 For Islam exalted Salman al-Farisi
 And abased the noble Abu Lahab!

And al-Mutanabbi said,

If the soul of the nobleman is not as noble as his ancestry,
 What good will it do him to reach a distinguished position?

Another poet said,

Of what use is being of a Hashim lineage!
 If the soul itself hails from Bahila!

The same applies to the descendants of saintly people. When they follow in their footsteps, they become equally virtuous and deserve to be revered and have their blessings sought, but when they

are ignorant and, heedless they must be counseled and guided to the right way. In either case, they should be given a certain amount of respect for their virtuous ancestors' sakes. Why should they not, when Allah the Exalted said what He did about the two boys and the wall,

وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا.

“There was, beneath it, a buried treasure, to which they were entitled: their father had been a righteous man.”¹

It is said that this refers to their seventh ancestor on their mother's side. For his sake they were protected in their worldly affairs, let alone those of the Hereafter. You should know this, understand, put everything in its place, give each his due.

وَاسْتَغْنِ بِاللَّهِ تُسَعِّدْ وَتُرْشِدْ

Seek Allah's help, you will be happy and well-guided!

وَالْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ

All Matters Belong to Allah.

¹ Surah 18 Al Kahf Verse 82.

Chapter Twenty Six

Assessing One's Spiritual State

Should a man wish to know whether he is rising or falling in religious terms, he should look at how his state and conduct had been a month or a year ago? If he finds that they were better than his present state and conduct, he should know that he is descending into degradation; whereas if he finds that his present state and conduct are better, he should know that he is rising and improving. It has been handed down that “he who finds that his day resembles the previous day has been cheated, and he who finds that his day is worse than the previous day is accursed.” Accursed here means remote from a particular and specially accorded mercy. He who is not increasing is diminishing.

To explain, if when thinking about previous days, you feel that you then had no desire for the world, were eager for the Hereafter, scrupulously avoided doubtful things, were quick to good actions, quick to obedience, remote from transgressions, and by comparison you are now no better or are to any extent worse, then know that you are going down, deteriorating in religion, in your aspiration for Allah, and in striving for the Hereafter. You should then feel apprehensive and fearful and then begin to show resolution and exert effort.

If, on the other hand, you find that you have more aspiration and eagerness than before, then thank Allah the Exalted even more, remember His gifts and graciousness, and be ever attentive to them. You should not feel pleased with yourself, nor think that it is due to your own ability and power, for as Allah the Exalted has said,

وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ.

“And were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, not one of you would ever have been pure: but Allah do purify whom He pleases: and Allah is One Who hears and knows (all things).”¹

¹ Surah 24 An Nur Verse 21

Chapter Twenty Seven

Attending to this World And to the Next

The man who gives his worldly life and his Hereafter equal attention and has inwardly the same degree of concentration and eagerness and outwardly the same amount of effort and pursuit, is excessively foolish and stupid. What then of the man who gives more attention and effort to his worldly life? And what then of the man who pays no attention at all nor exerts any effort for his life to come? We seek refuge in Allah against this. And ask Him to guard us from all other afflictions and dangers and for our loved ones and all Muslims!

Those who give their worldly life and their Hereafter equal attention deserve this description because they do not differentiate between that which is better, more permanent, purer, and more spacious, and that which is lowlier, ephemeral, turbid, disturbing, and constricting. They are similar to the man who treats equally diamonds and dung, or pure gold and clay. They are even stranger and more extraordinary than that. Had the life to come nothing to its credit but perpetuity and freedom from flaws, these alone should suffice that it be given priority. As one of our virtuous predecessors may Allah have mercy on them, once said, “Had the world been made of perishable gold and the Hereafter of permanent clay, we should have preferred permanent clay to perishable gold. What then when the reality is the reverse?” End of Quote!

It is clearly evident that those who prefer the world to the Hereafter are doubt-ridden skeptics, while those who treat them equally are unintelligent fools. Only those who prefer the Hereafter are intelligent and resolute believers.

وَالْفَضْلُ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ

Graciousness Favors are in Allah's Hand.

يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ،

He bestows His favors upon whomever He wills.

وَالْهُدَىٰ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ.

Guidance is Allah's; He guides whom He wills.

وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ.

He is the Most Wise and the Most Knowing.

Chapter Twenty Eight

The Ailments of the Heart

The ailments of the heart are, in many ways and from many different points of view, more harmful, dangerous, repugnant, and hideous than those of the body. Most harmful and dangerous is the fact that the ailments of the heart affect a man's religion, it is his capital investment for happiness in this world and the next, and that they damage his Hereafter, which is the life of permanence and eternity. Whereas the bodily illness harms a man's worldly life, which is ephemeral and quick to end, and harms his body, which is a target for afflictions and rapid destruction. Furthermore, physical illness may be of great benefit to one's religion and to one's future life, for Allah has made great rewards and numerous immediate and delayed benefits as the consequences of illness, as is evident from many Quranic verses and hadiths.

The ailments of the heart cannot be perceived by the senses and yield no painful physical symptoms; they are thus hidden and difficult to recognize and study. People have come to pay little heed to them; no longer do they seek to treat and cure them. Imam alGhazali said that such people are like a man who has no mirror but who is disfigured by leprosy, and who, when informed about his affliction by another person, will probably not believe him.

Furthermore, the heedless perceive as remote the torments and punishments in the Hereafter awaiting those whose hearts are diseased. They may even have doubts about their very existence, may Allah protect us, or they may deceive themselves with false hopes and illusions about Allah, promising themselves that they will be forgiven

and saved without having to work for this, and thus arouse in themselves the expectation that they will end up safe and secure. Because of these and similar attitudes, the ailments of the heart remain veiled even though they are overpowering. The heedless make light of them, and people no longer look for remedies, to the extent that some may be well aware of one or more diseases in their hearts yet remain unperturbed. By contrast, when they feel or are informed of a disease in their bodies, they grow most concerned, aggrieved and keen to have it treated and go to the very limits of their resources to do so. The reason behind this is as we have just said, diseases of the heart cannot be observed by the senses. They yield no physical pain, and the punishments they entail are not in evidence here and now, since they mainly occur only after death in the Afterlife. The heedless thinks of death as remote and regard what follows it is as even more distant. Were they only to employ their intelligence and seek certitude they would know that, as the Prophet may Allah's blessings and peace be on him said,

أَنَّ الْمَوْتَ أَقْرَبُ غَائِبٍ يُنْتَظَرُ.

“Death is the nearest of hidden things which lie in wait.”

And as the Prophet, may Allah's blessings and upon him be peace also said,

الْجَنَّةُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَى أَحَدِكُمْ مِنْ شِرَاكِ نَعْلِهِ.

“The Garden is nearer to each of you than the strings of your sandals.”
And Hell is likewise!

The ailments of the heart are many. One of the most dangerous and harmful is to harbor doubts about religion, may Allah protect us! One of it include weakness of faith in Allah, His Messenger, and the Hereafter; and another is compromising one's obedience to Allah to please people; arrogance towards Allah's creatures; greed, avarice, envy and rancor, deceiving other Muslims, loving the world and being preoccupied with it; harboring long hopes and forgetting death, thus being heedless of the Afterlife and neglecting to work for it; and the others among the sickness of the hearts and its related ills.

It is incumbent upon any man of intelligence who is zealous

for his religion and for his safety in the Hereafter to be eager to learn the ailments hidden in his heart, to strive to identify them, to treat them before death suddenly overtakes him and he returns to his Lord to meet Him with an unsound heart, lest he be one of the losers and perish along with all those who will perish.

The heart's ailments are identified and inferred it by recognizing the outward signs and characters which indicate their existence. These are numerous, and the most evident are laziness with respect to acts of obedience, sluggishness in good deeds, greed for the world's pleasures and passions, eagerness for worldly prosperity, yearning to continue to abide in the world for a long time, and other similar attributes of the heedless and of those who turn away from Allah the Exalted. When one detects these signs of the heart's sickness one must strive to treat and cure it.

The shortest and most effective way is to search for a learned person who is a gnostic [*Arif*] and a learned teacher [*Alim*], one of the "people of hearts and secrets." If he fails to find one, let him take counsel from a virtuous brother. If he fails to find such a brother, as is generally the case in these days when few people help each other in truth and virtue, then he must resort to the books of the leading authorities in such matters, where the diseases and their remedies are described. The most comprehensive and useful of these books is *Revival of the Sciences of Religion* [*Ihya' 'Ulum idDin*] especially the volume on "Mortal Vices." Books are not, however, a substitute for a gnostic teacher or a virtuous brother; they should be a last resort for those unable to find either.

وَاللَّهُ تَعَالَى يُعِينُ الطَّالِبَ عَلَى قَدْرِ هِمَّتِهِ وَصِدْقِهِ وَحُسْنِ رَغْبَتِهِ

May Allah the Exalted help the seeker according to his determination, sincerity and aspiration!

وَهُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ الْوَلِيُّ الْمُعِينُ.

And Glory belongs to Him who is the Trustee, the Helper.

Chapter Twenty Nine

The Balance Between Good and Evil Acts

The man who is either unable or lacks the energy to perform all the possible kinds of good works should not abandon them all, but should do whatever he finds easy and accessible. For goodness attracts goodness, the small attracts the great, and a little invites plenty and good habit is like a routine.

Similarly, whoever is incapable of abandoning all evil must abandon whatever he can, for a mixture of good and evil is better and lighter than total evil. Good works erase sins, as in the hadith that states,

أَتْبَعَ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةُ تَمْحُهَا

“Follow a sin with an act of goodness and it will erase it.”

Also in another hadith,

إِذَا عَمِلْتَ سَيِّئَةً فَأَعْمَلْ بَعْدَهَا حَسَنَةً تُكَفِّرُهَا السِّرُّ بِالسِّرِّ وَالْعَلَانِيَةُ بِالْعَلَانِيَةِ.

“If you commit a sin, follow it up with an act of goodness to erase it. Follow hidden sins with hidden acts of goodness; public or open acts likewise, with public,” or as it was narrated.

A servant afflicted with evil and transgression must not entirely turn away from Allah and from good works and obedience, for otherwise there will remain between him and his Lord no avenue for reconciliation or for returning to Him.

Let him heed the lesson in the story of the highway robbery who shed blood and robbed Muslims of their money. A virtuous man once saw the robber do these wrongdoings at the same he is fasting. He called to him saying, “How can you do what you are doing yet maintain the fast?” The man replied, “Indeed, I am leaving open a channel for reconciliation and will not sever all links between myself and my Lord.” Sometime later he saw the robber walking around [tawaf] the Ka'ba having repented. When they met he told him, “This is the result of the ‘fasting’ that reconciled me with my Lord.” This is the meaning of the narration.

It is evident that a Muslim should maintain complete obedience and a state of entire goodness. However, if this is not possible, if he is being hindered by his ego and his passions, and this leads him into any manner of evil or sin, then he must firmly preserve those acts of goodness and obedience which he finds possible and easy.

وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ.

And Allah is the Protector, the Praiseworthy One.

Chapter Thirty

The Company One Keeps

The company one keeps has major effects. It may lead either to benefit and improvement or to harm and corruption, depending on whether the company is that of pure and eminent people or people who are depraved and evil. This effect does not appear suddenly, but is a gradual process that unfolds with time. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, said,

الْمَرْءُ مَعَ جَلِيسِهِ

“A man will be with his companions.”

الْمَرْءُ عَلَى دِينِ حَلِيلِهِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَحَدُكُمْ مَنْ يُحِلُّ.

“A man's religion is that of his intimates, so let each of you consider who he becomes intimate with.”

He, may peace be upon him, also said,

مَثَلُ الْجَلِيسِ الصَّالِحِ كَبَائِعِ الْمِسْكِ، إِمَّا أَنْ يَحْذِيكَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَبْتَاعَ مِنْهُ، وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْهُ رَائِحَةً طَيِّبَةً، وَمَثَلُ الْجَلِيسِ السُّوءِ مَثَلُ نَافِخِ الْكَيْرِ، إِمَّا أَنْ يَحْرِقَ ثِيَابَكَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْهُ رِيحًا مُنْتَنَةً.

“A virtuous companion is like the merchant of musk. Either he will offer you some, you will buy it from him or you will find him pleasant to smell. But an evil companion is like the bellows-blower, either he will scorch your clothes or you will receive a rotten smell from him.”

If you wish to know whether those you mix and sit with increase or diminish your faith, religion and actions, compare your

state with regard to good character, praiseworthy intentions, resolution in performing acts of obedience, and goodness before and after their companionship. If you find that these acts have become stronger and more firmly established and that you have become more desirous of and interested in them, then know that this particular company is of benefit to your religion and your heart, and that if you continue with it you will gain even greater benefits and acquire many more good things, Allah willing. If, on the other hand, you find that your religion has grown weaker and shakier, know that this company is harmful, that its harm to your religion and your heart is evident, and that if you continue with it, this will lead to even greater harm and evil, may Allah protect us!

Similarly, you should also compare the bad points you had before and after keeping that company.

This is the way to evaluate one's position vis-a-vis those with whom one mixes and takes for one's companions. The decisive factor here is whether good or evil is more powerful and predominant.

When goodness in that company is more powerful and predominant, then a wicked man who mixes with them may become attracted to goodness and its people; whereas when wickedness prevails and dominates, then it is to be feared that the good people who keep such company may become attracted to wickedness and its people. These are subtle concepts known to people possessed of discernment and who have experience in such matters. The Prophet may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, said,

الْجَلِيسُ الصَّالِحُ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْوَحْدَةِ وَالْوَحْدَةُ خَيْرٌ مِنْ جَلِيسِ السُّوءِ.

“A good companion is better than solitude, and solitude is better than a wicked companion.”

The Prophet may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, was given a comprehensiveness of expression that no other man, whether of earlier or of recent times, was ever given.

Chapter Thirty One

The Reputation of Men And The Problems of Power

Becoming well acquainted with a true believer proves him better than his reputation, however good it is. The more you know and deal with him, the more your affection and respect for him grow because of what you are able to observe of his attentiveness to Allah, respect for His injunctions, swiftness to act for His good pleasure, perseverance in obedience, avoidance of sins, and being vigilant and on guard against anything likely to attract Allah's wrath.

By contrast, becoming well acquainted with a depraved hypocrite proves him worse than his reputation, however odious it may already be. The more you know and mix with him, the more you loathe and detest him because of his neglect of Allah's injunctions, his swiftness to activities loathsome to Him, his sluggishness in obedience, and his carelessness with his obligations to Allah.

Not very remote from this is the situation of people in high positions, either of religion, such as scholars and people of virtue or of the world, such as kings and rulers. When the people nearest and most connected to them are good and righteous, this indicates their own goodness and righteousness. However, some of the people connected with them, but separated by a distance, may not be as we have just described, the reason being that people in high positions may show a certain amount of weakness in the performance of their duties. They may be unaware of what their officials do or too preoccupied with other things of lesser importance. Thus the better and more upright those near to them are and the worse those remote from them, the more

this indicates that they themselves are good and righteous, albeit too weak.

Another possible reason is that areas of authority may grow larger and the subjects will then become spread out. Such a situation is referred to by the words of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, when he uttered in the last days of his rule, "O Lord, Allah! I have aged and become weaker, and the people for whom I am responsible have spread abroad. Take me to You having succumbed to neither temptation nor neglect." He also said, "Should a lamb die on the banks of the Euphrates because of neglect, I would fear being called to account for it."

It is thus clear that high positions and large responsibilities cannot be adequately shouldered by those who are either afflicted by some weakness or else lack the ability to observe and investigate. This is perhaps why some of the greatest men of religion have retreated and fled from such positions, preferring safety, which is one of the two gains.

The Prophet said, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him,

نَفْسٌ تُحْيِيهَا جَيْرٌ مِنْ إِمَارَةٍ لَا تُحْصِيهَا

"A soul to whom you give life is better than a governorship that you cannot control,"

It means that for which you are incapable of assuming responsibility adequately.

وَاللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ أَعْلَمُ.

And Allah knows best, Exalted is He!

Chapter Thirty Two

The Company of People of Virtue

It is desirable and recommended to associate with people of religion and goodness, the scholars who practice what they know, and the virtuous servants of Allah. This has many benefits, both immediate and deferred, and there are numerous reports and hadiths detailing them. However, people who desire and seek such things differ greatly in their aims. The first and highest aim in keeping the company of such people is to study their sciences, learn to be courteous through their courtesy, and observe and emulate their good character, praiseworthy qualities, good works, and speech.

Some associate with them for these reasons to the exclusion of any other. Others keep their company out of love for them, with the knowledge that they have preferred Allah's religion over all else, have established His ordinances, and striven to draw nearer to Him by the acquisition of useful knowledge and good character and by doing good works. They wish to associate with them in order to try to emulate them as time and circumstances allow; they are sorry to miss some of those things and wish they were able to do them.

A hadith narration reports,

“A man is with those he loves.” الْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ.

And another says,

وَمَنْ تَشَبَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ مِنْهُمْ.

“The one who emulates certain people becomes one of them.”

Still others associate with good people to gain their blessings [*baraka*] and good prayers [*du'a*] but have neither the intention [*niat*] nor the determination to follow their example. This is not devoid of blessings [*baraka*] and goodness [*khair*] and is alluded to by the hadith [*qudsi*]¹ which states,

هُمُ الْقَوْمُ لَا يَشْقَى بِهِمْ جَلِيسُهُمْ.

“They are the people whose companions never suffer wretchedness.”

This applies to the extent that those who associate with them in order to be protected through the good fortune and favors of their company, protected from iniquitous and aggressive people and from human and jinn demons, will not be disappointed, nor will blessings be withheld from them. But these benefits are withheld from those whose aim is to become known among people for keeping such company, hoping thus to be able to attain prohibited and illicit things, thinking wrongly that if people know them to associate with the good and virtuous they will never suspect them of sinning. It is not impossible for some people to have such aims; they are forsaken by Allah, the Exalted, and are the object of His anger. Imam al-Ghazali, may Allah have mercy on him, in the chapter detailing the different kinds of ostentation and their goals, says that some parade their acts of obedience so that people may know about them, which makes it possible for them to behave with depravity. The Devil is a manifest enemy, and he uses many kinds of deceitful and fraudulent stratagems of which these are some examples. There are more dangerous and reprehensible things still.

نَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ الْعَافِيَةَ وَالْحِفْظَ.

We ask Allah for well-being and protection,

فَإِنَّهُ خَيْرُ حَافِظِينَ.

For He is the best of protectors.

¹ A hadith Qudsi contains Allah's words within the body of the hadith.

Chapter Thirty Three

The Degrees of Permissible [*Halal*] And Forbidden [*Haram*]

It is a well recognize obligation that one should seek permissible [*halal*] things, eat *halal* food, wear *halal* clothes, and do so only to the extent of fulfilling one's needs and no more. Such behavior results in great advantages and in precious and major results. This is indispensable if one is to purify one's heart, render it more subtle and illuminated and adorn it with noble, righteous beliefs, saving qualities, and good character, and to purify the senses with good works, sincere obedience and upright speech.

The *halal* is of many degrees, the highest and best being that which is absolutely *halal* and essentially so in every respect. Such is sweet running water, herbs growing on uncultivated land, hunted game, and fish from the sea. These things are absolutely *halal* when eaten in the permitted way, with due caution, and with the intention that they shall be of assistance in obeying Allah, worshipping Him, and establishing His rule, and in quantities just sufficient to fulfill the need and no more.

Some of the virtuous predecessors [*salaf*] ate only herbs for so long that their bodies began to acquire a greenish hue. For Sufian Athawri and Ibrahim bin Adham, may Allah mercy be upon them, if they could not find *halal* food as prescribed, they replaced it with sand! For them it served as their nutritious food. Then there are certain herbs that grow on some mountains and in some valleys which a man may eat and nothing else besides them. Allah supports the servant

according to his intention and aim.

The second degree of *halal* is that which is pure absolute *halal* in one respect but not in another, such as food and clothes bought in strictly necessary quantities with money earned by gathering herbs and wood from the valleys, provided one is morally scrupulous in doing so. This category consist mainly from most of the virtuous predecessors [*salaful salleh*].

The third degree is that which is obtained when the thing is absolutely *halal* in neither of these respects but derives from money earned either as a merchant or a craftsman, such as a silversmith, a tailor or a carpenter. This degree of the *halal* exists when these people buy and sell while be mindful of their duties to and fear of Allah [*taqwa*], scrupulousness, vigilance and caution, and with the intention of using that which they earn to assist them in Allah's obedience, in conforming to His injunctions, using nothing but the strictly necessary to fulfill their needs, like in cloths and food, and giving the surplus away in charitable and benevolent acts done solely for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

The fourth degree of the *halal* applies to those people whose actions are mixed, who are not cautious in their transactions, nor alert to doubtful things, are complacent, and show little *taqwa* in whatever they take or leave. Much of their money is of doubtful provenance, and their possessions represent a mixture. About them it is said, "Whoever cares not where he obtains his money, Allah cares not from which of the gates of Hell He will make him enter."

Opposed to those four degrees of the *halal* are the four degrees of things which are either prohibited [*haram*], restricted, doubtful, or problematic.

The first of these are that which is totally *haram* except in dire necessity. Examples of this category include consuming the decaying flesh of dead animals, blood, pork and alcohol.

The second category is composed of things which are *halal* in themselves but are *haram* because they are owned by someone else. Barley, wheat, dates and raisins could be examples. These are *haram*

unless they reach you legal and rightfully by way of purchase, a gift or inheritance.

The third and fourth categories are items which are either originally *haram* but have become *halal* through doubtful means, or were originally *halal* until doubts were raised as to whether for any reason they have become *haram*. These categories are unacceptable to people of truth and *taqwa*, but those of little knowledge and *taqwa*, overcome by their egos and their passions, accept them. There is a sound hadith that states,

مَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ وَقَعَ فِي الْحَرَامِ كَالرَّاعِي يَرْعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَقَعَ فِيهِ.

“Those who fall into doubtful things will fall into the prohibited; like the grazing animal which, grazing too near the edge of the ravine, is likely to fall into it.”

There is also the well-known hadith of 'Uqba, who he married a woman, though, afterwards, a black woman came along and claimed that she had breastfed him and also breastfed the woman he married. The Messenger, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, told 'Uqba to divorce his wife because of the doubts that had been raised over the legality of his marriage. Imam al-Ghazali, may Allah have mercy be upon him, has written on this at great length in the section on *halal* and *haram* in his book 'The Revival of Religious Science' [*Ihya Ulumuddin*].

The problem and complication lies in mostly those *halal* in appearance, but to accept them necessitates complacency, carelessness as to whom one deals with or takes from, wastefulness, overspending, and pleasure seeking. This is where the *halal* becomes narrow and people take risks in what they use, how they transact business, and the pleasures they pursue. It is said that *halal* does not bear wastefulness.

A hadith states,

لَا يَبْلُغُ الْعَبْدُ دَرَجَةَ الْمُتَّقِينَ حَتَّى يَتْرُكُ مَا لَا بَأْسَ بِهِ حَذَرًا مِمَّا بِهِ بَأْسٌ.

“A servant does not reach the degree of the people of *taqwa* until he leaves that which is untainted for fear of that which is tainted.”

And one of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, said, “We used to leave nine-tenths of what was licit for fear of falling into the prohibited.”

And a hadith narrated by al-Hasan, the son of Ali, may Allah be pleased with them both, that adds to the above state,

مَا يُرِيدُكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يُرِيدُكَ.

“Leave that which arouses your suspicion for that which does not.”

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ

And Allah knows best.

Chapter Thirty Four

The Insinuation of the Devil

Among the most harmful things that can befall a worshipper as he engages in Prayer, recitation of the Quran, or invocation of Allah the Exalted are the whisperings in the breast, the crowding of thoughts, and the ego's prattling about matters past and future. When the heart is submerged and preoccupied with them, they ruin the essence, meaning, and aim of one's acts of worship and may even ruin their outward appearance as well. His state will then be equivalent to one who has not performed them at all or may be even worse. This is familiar to all those who concern themselves with and have experience in these matters, who are concerned about their religion, giving Allah what is due to Him, and working for their Hereafter.

When these notions and prattling relate to acts of obedience, but are unrelated to the one at hand, they are satanic ploys and attempts to confuse the believer by selling him evil dressed up as good. If they concern barely licit things, then this is even lower and more villainous, whereas if they pertain to sins and transgressions, this is the worst and vilest of all. These thoughts may cause a servant to be rejected from the presence of Allah, the Exalted, and become one of the loathsome repudiates.

Let the servant then beware of this to the utmost; let him not abandon his soul to its prattling and fruitless tales when standing before Allah, the Exalted, remembering Him, communing with Him, praying before His glorious Countenance, or reciting His sublime Book.

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ.

“And if any strive (with might and main), they do so for their own souls: for Allah is free of all needs from all creation.”¹

وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ.

“And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but persons of the greatest good fortune.”

وَأَمَّا يَنْزِعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ

“And if an incitement to discord is made to you by the Evil One,

فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ

Seek refuge in Allah.”

إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ.

“He is the One Who hears and knows all things.”²

¹ Surah 29 Al-Ankabut Verse 6.

² Surah 41 Fussilat Verse 35 and 36.

Chapter Thirty Five

Rectitude

Rectitude on the Straight Path [*istiqama*], the even road leading to Allah the Exalted, which is devoid of crookedness and deviation, is a most difficult, indeed unattainable matter, except for the prophets, who are infallible, and for the great people of Allah, the truly righteous [*siddiqun*] among the saints, who are well-guarded. Allah the Exalted has said to His trustworthy Messenger,

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا، إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ. وَلَا تَرْكُنُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ. وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفَا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرَى لِلذَّاكِرِينَ. وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

“Therefore, stand firm in the straight Path (rectitude) as you are commanded, and those who with you turn unto Allah; and transgress not from the Path: for He sees well all that you do. And incline not to those who do wrong, or the Fire will seize you; and you have no protectors other than Allah, nor shall you be helped. And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things, that are good remove those that are evil. Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember their Lord. And be steadfast in patience; for verily Allah wastes not the reward of the righteous.”¹

¹ Surah 11 Hud Verses 112-115

And the Exalted say,

فَلِذَلِكَ فَادْعُ، وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ، وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ، وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ، وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ، اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ، لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ، لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ، اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ.

“Now then, for that reason, call them to the Faith and stand steadfast as you are commanded. Nor do you follow their vain desires; but say: “I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord: for we are responsible for our deeds and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is (our) Final Goal.”¹

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَفَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ. نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَاؤُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ، وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدَّعُونَ، نُزُلًا مِنْ غَفُورٍ رَحِيمٍ.

In the case of those who say, “Our Lord is Allah”, and further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them from time to time: (they say to them), “Fear not! Nor grieve! But receive the Glad Tidings of the Garden of Bliss, that which you were promised! “We are your protectors in this life and in the Hereafter: therein shall you have all that your souls shall desire; therein for you all that you ask for!” A welcoming gift from one Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful!²

And the Exalted says,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَفَامُوا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ. أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ.

“Verily those who say, “Our Lord is Allah,” and remain rectitude on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve. Such shall be people of the Gardens, immortal therein, a recompense for their (good) deeds.”³

¹ Surah 42 Ash-Shura Verse 15

² Surah 41 Fussilat Verses 30 - 32

³ Surah 46 Al-Ahqaf Verses 13 - 14

The Messenger of Allah may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, said,

اسْتَقَامُوا وَلَكِنْ تُخْصُوا وَلَكِنْ سَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ لَنْ يَنْجُو أَحَدٌ بِعَمَلِهِ.

“Have rectitude! You will not be capable of it all, but aim well and as near as you can, and know that none will be saved by his works.”

The Companions asked, “Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?”

وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَعَمَّدَنِي اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ وَفَضْلٍ.

He answered, “Not even I, were not Allah to enfold me with mercy and grace from Him.”

Sufyan bin Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him said, “I once asked, “O Messenger of Allah! Tell me something about Islam such that I need ask no one else.” He answered, “Say, I believe in Allah! Then have rectitude.”

And Umar may Allah be pleased with him said, “Have rectitude and do not swerve like a fox.”

Rectitude is the all-inclusive quality that embraces all useful knowledge, good character, and good deeds, along with firmness, absence of wavering, disturbance, deviation, or deviousness.

Once one of our predecessors said, “The all-inclusive special blessing [*karama*] resides in rectitude [*istiqama*]”.

Then a man of virtue once saw in a dream the Messenger of Allah may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, and said to him, “O Messenger of Allah! When it was said to you, “Your hair has turned gray, O Messenger of Allah!” you said, “It is (Surah) Hud and its sisters. That is what made my hair turn gray.” What is it in them that did this? And (the Prophet) replied, may Allah's peace and blessings be on him, “The Exalted said, “Have rectitude as you were commanded!”

The hadiths narrates that “Surah Hud and its sisters turned his hair gray,” indicate that they did so because those chapters spoke of the destruction of nations as in,

أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّعَادِ قَوْمِ هُودٍ.

“Ah! Behold! removed (from sight) were 'Ad the people of Hud!”¹

أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّثَمُودَ

“Ah! Behold! removed (from sight) were the Thamud!”²

أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّمَدْيَنَ كَمَا بَعِثْتَ ثَمُودَ

“Ah! Behold! How the Madyan were removed (from sight) as were removed the Thamud!”³

These are not incompatible with the dream mentioned. Each has an appropriate interpretation at its level. However, a soundly transmitted hadith has a far higher and sounder standing than a dream, even if the dream is a righteous one dreamt by a righteous man.

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ

Allah knows best!

¹ Suruh 11 Hud Verse 60

² Suruh 11 Hud Verse 68

³ Suruh 11 Hud Verse 90

Chapter Thirty Six

Certitude and Detachment

Allah, the Mightiest and Most Noble of speakers is He, has said,

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. الْم. ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ. الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ. وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ. أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ.

“In the Name of Allah Most Merciful and Most Generous. Alif Lam Min. This is the Book, in which there is no doubt, a guidance for those who are mindful of their duties to and fear of Allah. Those who believe in the unseen, establish Prayer, and spend of that which We have bestowed upon them. And those who believe in that which is revealed to you (O Muhammad) and that which was revealed before you and are certain of the Hereafter. It is they who are upon guidance from their Lord, and it is they who are successful.”¹

And the Exalted says,

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعُلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ.

“That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth, and the best ending is for the righteous.”²

And the Exalted says,

¹ Surah 2 Al Baqara Verses 1-5

² Surah 28 Al Qasas Verse 83

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ.

“To whoever that desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We give increase in his harvest, and to any that desires the tilth of this world, We grant somewhat thereof, but he has no share in the Hereafter.”¹

The Prophet, may Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him and his family, said,

الْكَيِّسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهُ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ وَالْعَاجِزُ مَنْ أَتْبَعَ نَفْسَهُ هَوَاهَا وَتَمَتَّى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْأَمَانِي

“The sagacious person is he who accuses himself and works for what comes after death. The incapable person follows his self’s [naf] passions and indulges in illusory hopes concerning Allah.”

And he, may Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him and his family, said to Abdullah ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with both,

كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ وَعُدَّ نَفْسَكَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُبُورِ.

“Be in the world as a stranger or a wayfarer and count yourself among the people of the graves.”

When the following verse was revealed,

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّنْ رَبِّهِ.

“Is one whose heart Allah has opened to Islam, so that he has received Enlightenment from Allah.”²

The Companions asked the Prophet may Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him, what this “opened” was, and he replied, “Light! When it enters the heart, the breast expands for it and enlarges.” They then asked whether this had any signs and he replied, “To shun the abode of illusions and attend to the abode of permanence, and to prepare for death before it descends.”

¹ Surah 42 Ash-shuraa Verse 20

² Surah 39 Az-Zumar Verse 22

Those who reflect on these noble verses and on the prophetic hadiths and sayings of the righteous predecessors, may Allah's mercy be on them all, whether the great among the Companions, Followers, or those who followed them with excellence and possessed certitude about Allah, His Messenger, and the Last Day, with its promises, threats, painful punishment for the unbelievers and the depraved, and permanent happiness in the Garden of Bliss for the people of *taqwa*, certainty, and excellence, will lose all desire for the world's cheap material possessions and its ephemeral, confusing, and disturbing pleasures, and will experience great longing for the permanent abode, where bliss is perpetual and free from all blemishes and disturbances. They will be diligent, strive seriously, and devote all of their time, breaths, states, movements, and moments of rest to that which will save them from Allah's wrath and punishment and will be of advantage to them in the life to come. They will abstain from all that is worldly except what is strictly necessary to enable them to devote themselves to acquiring useful knowledge, superior character, and good works, so as to attain their goal. They will abstain from sharing in or competing for the pleasures, appetites, and passions which are pursued by the heedless and the unaware, who resemble sheep and cattle and about whom Allah the Exalted says,

أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ، أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ.

“Those are like cattle, they are even worse; those are the heedless.”¹

They give up their participation in it and their business on it as described by Imam al-Shafi'i, may Allah's mercy be upon him, when he said,

If you know not this world, as I do;

Both its sweet and bitter things were brought to me.

But a putrefied carcass it is,

Surrounded by dogs, quarreling over it.

Avoid it and you are peace to its people.

Pull it, however, and its dogs will pull you.

¹ Surah 7 Al- Araaf Verse 179

Another poet says,

When the intelligent ones test the world they see it
As an enemy in friendly clothes.

Yet another says,

Move away from the world; seek not to wed her.
For she is the one who slays her husband.
Her favors never match her parts of fear;
Observe her; more often you will see offense.

In sum, the person of intelligence, perspicacity, and resolution is he who dedicates most of his time in preparing for his life to come and gathering provisions for the appointed time. He should not allot time for other things save those which are necessary to help him along, and he should do so with caution and frugality, using worldly things sparingly, and listening attentively to the words of his Prophet, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him and his family, who said,

مَا لِي وَلِلدُّنْيَا إِنَّهَا مَتْلِي وَمَتْلُهَا كَرَائِبٍ سَارٍ فِي يَوْمٍ صَائِفٍ، فَقَالَ تَحْتَ شَجَرَةٍ،
ثُمَّ رَاحَ عَنْهَا وَتَرَكَهَا.

“What do I have with the world? With regard to this world, I am like a rider that moves on a summer day, who takes rest under a tree, and then departs and leaves it.”

And, he may Allah's blessings and peace be on him said,

لَوْ كَانَتْ الدُّنْيَا تَرَنٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ جَنَاحَ بَعُوضَةٍ مَا سَقَى مِنْهَا كَافِرًا شَرْبَةً مَاءٍ.

“Had the value of world weighed with Allah so much as the wing of a fly, he would not have given a disbeliever a sip of its water.”

And, he may Allah's blessings and peace be on him said,

الدُّنْيَا سِجْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَجَنَّةُ الْكَافِرِ.

“The world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the disbeliever.”

وَاللَّهُ الْمُؤَفِّقُ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَالْمُعِينُ.

It is Allah who grants success; He is the Protector, the Helper.

Chapter Thirty Seven

The World is But a Moment

Imam al-Shafi'i, may Allah's mercy be upon him, said, "The world is but a moment; so make it a moment of obedience."

Al-Busti says in his famous poem [*qasida*]:

"Increase in worldly things is to a man but diminishment.

And his profits in other than sheer goodness are nothing but loss."

Imam Isma'il al-Maqqari says in a poem [*qasida*] counseling his son and it begins with:

"Till when will you dwell in illusion and distraction?

How long will you sleep and not awake?

Will you spend all that you have in the love of that,

Which Allah value it lower than the wing of a gnat?

Even if you should obtain Qarun's fortune, it would still be

But a morsel in your mouth and a cloth on your body.

Until the end of his advice, may Allah have mercy upon him.

It is evident from all that we have mentioned in the previous chapter that an intelligent man possessed of certainty, wisdom, and discernment should be preoccupied solely with his life to come and with working for it, and with that which is strictly necessary in his daily life to help him achieve his aim.

He, the Exalted say,

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ.

And if any strive (with might and main), they do so for their own souls: for Allah is free of all needs from all creation¹.

He, the Exalted also say,

وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ.

And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but persons of the greatest good fortune².

¹ Surah 29 Al Ankaboot Verse 6

² Surah 41 Fussilat Verse 35

Chapter Thirty Eight

Structuring Time

The Proof of Islam, Imam al-Ghazali, may Allah's mercy be on him. Wrote in his book 'The Beginning of Guidance' [*Bidayatul Hidayah*] in the chapter on "Preparing for the Ritual Prayers,"

"You should not neglect your time or use it haphazardly; on the contrary, you should bring yourself to account, structure your litanies [*awrad*] and other practices during each day and night, and assign to each period a fixed and specific function. This is how to bring out the spiritual blessing [*baraka*] in each period. But if you leave yourself adrift, aimlessly wandering as cattle do, not knowing how to occupy yourself at every moment, your time will be lost. It is nothing other than your life, and your life is the capital that you make use of to reach perpetual felicity in the proximity of Allah, the Exalted. Each of your breaths is a priceless jewel, since each of them is irreplaceable and, once gone, can never be retrieved. Do not be like the deceived fools who are joyous because each day their wealth increases while their life shortens. What good is an increase in wealth when life grows ever shorter? Therefore, be joyous only for an increase in knowledge or in good works, for they are your two companions who will accompany you in your grave when your family, wealth, children, and friends stay behind." End of quote.

He, may Allah's mercy be on him, also wrote, "You should know that the night and day comprise twenty-four hours; therefore do not sleep more than eight hours, for it should suffice you, for if you were to live sixty years, for instance, you would have wasted twenty,

which is one third.”

And he, may Allah’s mercy be on him, also said, “If you do remember death and prepare for its coming, you will be patience and forbearance in obedience to Allah, the Exalted and will experience endless joy when death arrives. Whereas if you are complacent and procrastinate, death will come to you at an unforeseen moment and you will know regrets without end. At dawn people are grateful for the traveling they did by night. With death, certainty comes to you; you will surely have its experience, in time.” This is the end of quote from *Bidayatul Hidaya*.

This book, though shorter than many lengthier treatises dealing with the same matter, contains what should be enough for the intelligent alert believer who is active in worship. A Shadhili scholar once said, “What Imam al-Ghazali, may Allah have mercy on him, has included in *The Beginning of Guidance* is sufficient for a sufi beginner; what he has included in *The Way of the Worshippers* [*Minhaj al-Abidin*] suffices the one in the middle; and *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* [*Ihya' Ulum ad-Din*] is enough for the one near the end of the path.”

The matter is this way for whoever is fair in his judgment and aims to adorn himself with the best of virtues and attributes. Allah grants success, there is no other Lord.

How excellent are the poet’s words,

Gather provision for the inescapable.

Mankind has an appointment at the Resurrection.

Will it please you to be with those whose
provision is abundant while yours is amiss?

Also, the famous poet begins his poem [*qasida*] with,

I see that daylight illumines for you
the upright road from which you swerve.

Then he continued to wrote,

We fall prey to the illusion of the green branches
of hope, Which never bear fruit.

This is a blessed poem belonging to a certain man from Yemen. Our master Shaikh Umar al-Mihdar ibn Abdal Rahman used to like it and so did Shaikh Fadl ibn Abdallah atTarim al-Shihr, may Allah have mercy on them and spread their benefit and that of all virtuous servants of Allah.

Chapter Thirty Nine

Ali and The World

It has been related that Mu`awiya asked Dirar ibn Damra to describe Ali to him. “Exempt me, O Commander of the Faithful!” Dirar said. But Mu`awiya said, “I shall not exempt you!” He then replied:

“Then I will say this. He was, may Allah be pleased with him, farsighted and of mighty strength. His words were decisive, and his judgment just. He liked coarse food, short clothes and felt estranged from the world and its beauty, and was intimate with night and its darkness. I bear witness that once I saw him when night had fallen, and the stars had risen, wakeful in his prayer-niche, like a man that had been stung, restless as though wounded, weeping sorrowfully, holding his beard, and saying, “O world! Deceive other than myself! Is it for me that you beautify yourself? Is it to me that you manifest yourself? I have divorced you thrice; there can be no return, for your span is short, your worth insignificant, and your danger great! Ah! The scarcity of provision, the length of the path and the estrangement of traveling!””

Mu'awiya then wept, raising his sleeve to his face to stem his tears as best as he could, and then said, “May Allah have mercy on Abu Al Hasan. He was, by Allah, truly so!” There is evidence to indicate that Mu`awiya regretted opposing and warring with Ali, and others regretted it too, like `Aisha and al-Zubayr, may Allah be pleased with them. `Abdullah ibn Umar may Allah be pleased with him and his father regretted his abstention from fighting alongside `Ali, may peace be on him,

وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا.

But the command of Allah was a destiny decreed!¹

May Allah be pleased with every Companion of the Messenger of Allah.

How excellent is the saying of the author of the *Burda*, in exhortation to gather provision for the Hereafter:

I beg of Allah forgiveness for saying and not doing,
For thus attributing offspring to one sterile.

I ordered you to do good, but my soul did not obey;
Neither was I upright. How can I tell you to be?

I stored no provisions, before death, of devotions.
I prayed and I fasted only when obliged;"

I neglected the example of he who kept awake
in the dark so long that his feet suffered and swelled

He who braced his stomach from hunger
tying stones to his gracious side.

Proud mountains of gold offered themselves
to him who showed them how pride should be.

His detachment was emphasized by his want,
But *want* cannot overcome divine protection?

How can *want* attract to the world one
Without whom the world would not exist,

Muhammad, master of the two worlds
and the two weighty things and the two groups,
the Arabs and the non-Arabs.

He also says in his poem in *Lam*:

Till when shall you remain absorbed in your pleasures
When you shall account for every act?

¹ Surah 33 Al Ahzab Verse 38

Every day you leave repentance for the morrow,
The power of your resolution dissolved by delay.
And al-Khalil ibn Ahmad may Allah's mercy be on him, says,
It is but one night after the other,
Day after day and month after month.
Stages drawing new things to decay
And lowering the remains of noblemen into graves.
They give the wives of jealous men to others
And take that which the avaricious had set by.
Another poet says:
Wealth I see adds to your longing
For the world as if you are to live forever.
Is there a limit that you might reach?
Where you would say, "Enough! I am satisfied!"?

Chapter Forty

The Companions And The World

It was related that Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, when he breathed, exhaled the smell of grilled liver. It is said that this was because of his excessive fear of Allah, the Exalted, on account of his grief and sorrow at the death of the Messenger of Allah, may blessings and peace be on him and his family, because of the viper's venom, for he had been bitten while he was blocking a hole in the earth with his heel to protect the Messenger of Allah on the night when they were in the cave, and lastly because of poisoned food he once ate together with a man whose name was, I think, al-Harith. This man had knowledge of medicine, and when he felt what was there, he told Abu Bakr, "The food is poisoned, a year from now we shall both die of it." It is said that they both did die on the same day.

When he fell ill, they asked him if they should not bring him a physician, he but answered, "The Physician has looked at me and said, "I do what I will."'" According to another version, it said, "It is the Physician who has made me ill," meaning the Exalted Lord. When he felt weak and designated Umar as his successor, he ordered them to return the little that had been his assigned share from the treasury to Umar, and the latter said, "He has made it hard for those who will come after him."

Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah, the Exalted, be pleased with him, ate barley and patched his own clothes. His conduct is very famous. He would read verses from the Book of Allah during his night Prayers, then become overwhelmed with fear, fall to the ground, become ill, stay at home, and people would visit him in the way that they visited sick men.

Uthman ibn `Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, used to give the caliph's food to the people, then enter his house and eat bread dipped in oil. When the perpetrators of outrage climbed onto his house, entered it, and murdered him, he said, "O Allah! Unite the Nation of Muhammad!" The Quran was on his lap and some of his blood fell on His words, Exalted is He,

فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ.

"But Allah will suffice you as against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."¹

Later, one of the Companions, possibly Abdullah ibn Salam said, "Had he not prayed that Allah, the Exalted, unite the Nation, it would never have united after him."

As for Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah, the Exalted be pleased with him he used to eat barley as a caliph and shortened the sleeves of his shirts to the wrist or the fingertips. When he was criticized for the roughness of his lifestyle and his clothes, he replied, "It is so that the Muslims may take me as an example and not despise the poor because of their poverty."

This was the pattern of behavior of the first among the Emigrants [*Muhajirin*] and Helpers [*Ansar*], may Allah be pleased with them. They took little from this world and confined themselves to essentials. The biographies of such people as `Ammar, Abu `Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah, Mu`adh ibn Jabal, Abu Dharr, Hudhayfa, Khabbab ibn al-Arat, and `Itban ibn Malik testify to this.

Thus also were the leaders among the Followers of the Companions [*atTabi`in*], such as Imam Ali Zainal Abidin, the son of Imam Husain, his son Muhammad alBaqir, his grandson Jafar, Sa'id ibn alMusayyab, Umar ibn 'Abdul Aziz, Uways alQarni, Harim ibn Hayyan, alHasan alBasri, Abi Hazim al Madani, and Ata ibn alSa`ib.

So too were the Followers of the Followers, such as the four Imams, Fudayl ibn Iyad, Ibrahim ibn Adham, Ibrahim alTaymi, Malik

¹ Surah 2 Al Baqara Verse 137

ibn Dinar, and others of the first three best generations.

Concerning them, the Prophet, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him said,

حَيْرُ الْقُرُونِ قَرْنِي، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ.

“The best generation is my generation, then those who will follow them, then those who will follow them,” He repeated “then those who will follow them,” two or three times.

And he, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him also said,

فِي كُلِّ قَرْنٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي سَابِقُونَ.

“In each of my Nation's generations there will be among them the foremost.”

And this is indeed so; but they are growing smaller in number, and at certain periods conceal themselves. We have mentioned some glimpses of the ways of our predecessors in our book “The Perfect Sermon [*ad-Da'watul Tamma*], and made frequent references to them in our poem [*qasida*] which begins with:

يَا سَائِلِي عَنْ عَبْرَتِي وَمَدَامِعِي وَتَنْهَدِ تَرْتَجُّ مِنْهُ أَضَالِعِي.

O you who ask about my tears And the sighs shaking my ribs.

An ample commentary on this poem was made by one of our closest companions, the scholar Shaikh Ahmad ibn Zain Alhabshi `Alawi. He mentioned some of the merits of every person mentioned in the poem. As for this book, because our aim is to make it brief, we have refrained from elaborating on their merits. They are mentioned in abundance in other works, such as the biographies of our predecessors, the book *Majma' al-Ahbab*, *Qut al-Qulub* by Imam Abu Talib al-Makki, and the *Ihya'* of the Proof of Islam, as well as other works of biography and history. Let him peruse them who wishes to know the pattern of our virtuous predecessors, the Companions, Followers, and Followers of the Followers, to know how they gave precedence to the Afterlife over this one, were content with few worldly things, were neither deceived by this world's beauty, nor eager to enjoy its pleasures, even though it was available to them in a lawful manner.

A wide saying attribute to Allah:

Indeed intelligent servants are living their lives for Allah,
They divorce the worldly lives and fear its trials.

They know that each time when they gaze into it,
That it is surely not the final living abode.

They liken it (this worldly life) to a deep ocean,
And makes their good deeds as a ship to sail through it

And Abil Athaahiyati said,

Know! O Seeker of these worldly lives,
Leave behind it for these surely will tainted you.

Do not choose this worldly live, for
A tiny shade (worthless) is but sufficient for you.

And Bishr bin alHarith said,

A swear by Allah, by the trauma of a tiny seed,
and by the heart of salty drink.

That would be better for the soul,
then asking from those with sour face.

So, you must consider life suffice with just Allah,
then you are not in need.

The disappointment in man's help is significant and taqwa,
is an honor that can curb the lust of the scandalous self.

Whoever aims to fulfil his worldly desires,
Surely one day he will be self-destruction.

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ

Greetings to All the Messengers

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praises and Thanks belong to Allah the Lord of all Universes

Conclusion

We conclude with the verses from the Book of Allah, the Exalted and All-Mighty, the narrations from the practices of the Messenger of Allah. may Allah blessings and peace be upon him and the recordings of the actions of the pious primordial predecessors and those well guided in the path to Allah, may Allah cause us to benefit from them.

Allah, the Exalted and Majestic says,

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ، ثُمَّ تُؤَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ.

“And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.¹

It is reported that this was the last verse of the Quran to be revealed, and that according to one version, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s blessings and peace be on him, lived only ten days thereafter.

And the Exalted says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ.

“O, you who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah; that you may prosper.²

And the Exalted says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ، فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا.

¹ Surah 2 Al Baqara Verse 281

² Surah 3 Ala Imran Verse 200

“O, ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination.”¹

And the Exalted says,

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعُمُوا، إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ، ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا، ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا، وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

“On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness there is no blame for what they ate in the past, if they mindful of their duties and fear Allah, and believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and again, be mindful of their duties and fear Allah and believe, and again, be mindful of their duties and fear Allah and act with excellence, for indeed, Allah loves those who act with excellence”.²

And the Exalted says,

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ.

“Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; But turn away from the ignorant.”³

And the Exalted says,

وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُو مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ.

“In whatever business you may be, and whatever portion you may be reciting from the Quran, and whatever deed you (mankind) may be doing, We are witnesses thereof when ye are deeply engrossed therein, nor is hidden from your Lord so much as the weight of an atom on the earth or in heaven. And not the least and not the greatest of these things

¹ Surah 4 An Nisaa Verse 59

² Surah 5 Al Maidah Verse 93

³ Surah 7 Al Araaf Verse 199

but are recorded in a clear record.”¹

And the Exalted says,

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ.

“Those who desire the life of the present and its glitter, to them we shall grant the price of their deeds therein, without diminution.”²

And the Exalted says,

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Nor do I absolve my own self of blame, the human soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”³

And the Exalted says,

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَخَفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ.

“Strain not your eyes, wistfully, at what We have bestowed on certain classes of them, nor grieve over them: but lower your wing in gentleness to the believers.”⁴

And the Exalted says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ.

“For Allah is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good.”⁵

And the Exalted says,

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا.

“Whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner.”⁶

¹ Surah 10 Yunus Verse 61

² Surah 11 Hud Verse 15

³ Surah 12 Yusuf Verse 53

⁴ Surah 15 Al-Hijr Verse 88

⁵ Surah 16 An Nahl Verse 128

⁶ Surah 18 Al Kahf Verse 110

And the Exalted says,

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ.

“Enjoin prayer on thy people and be constant therein. We ask thee not to provide sustenance: We provide it for thee. But the (fruit of) the Hereafter is for righteousness.”¹

And the Exalted says,

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ.

“Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?”²

And the Exalted says,

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا، وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

“And those who strive in Our sake, We will certainly guide them to our Paths: For verily Allah is with those who act excellently.”³

And the Exalted says,

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ، إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا.

“We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it. He was indeed unjust and foolish.”⁴

And the Exalted says,

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ، سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ.

“No just estimate have they made of Allah, such as is due to Him: On the Day of Judgment the whole of the earth will be but His handful, and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand: Glory to Him!

¹ Surah 20 Taa-Haa Verse 132

² Surah 22 AL-Muminoon Verse 115

³ Surah 29 Al Ankabut Verse 69

⁴ Surah 33 Al-Ahzab Verse 72

High is He above the Partners they attribute to Him!”¹

And the Exalted says,

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً
مَحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ، سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ.

“What! Do those who seek after evil ways think that We shall hold them equal with those who believe and do righteous deeds, that equal will be their life and their death? Ill is the judgment that they make.”²

And the Exalted says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ، وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ.

“O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul look to what (provision) He has sent forth for the morrow. Yea, fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.”³

And the Exalted says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ
وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ،
نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتِمِّمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا، إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

“O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: In the hope that your Lord will remove from you your ills and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, the Day that Allah will not permit to be humiliated the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their Light will run forward before them and by their right hands, while they say, “Our Lord! Perfect our Light for us and grant us Forgiveness: for You has the power over all things.””⁴

¹ Surah 39 Az-Zumar Verse 67

² Surah 45 Al-Jaathiya Verse 21

³ Surah 59 Al-Hashr Verse 18

⁴ Surah 66 At-Tahrim Verse 8

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, said,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ تَوُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَمُوتُوا، وَبَادِرُوا بِالْأَعْمَالِ الصَّالِحَةِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُشْغَلُوا،
وَصَلُّوا الَّذِي بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ رَبِّكُمْ بِكَثْرَةِ ذِكْرِكُمْ لَهُ.

“O people! Repent unto Allah before you die! Hasten to good works before you become too occupied; and strengthen the ties between you and your Lord by remembering Him in abundance.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

بَادِرُوا بِالْأَعْمَالِ فَنَنَّا كَقَطْعِ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ، يُصْبِحُ الرَّجُلُ فِيهَا مُؤْمِنًا وَيُمْسِي كَافِرًا،
أَوْ يُمْسِي فِيهَا مُؤْمِنًا وَيُصْبِحُ كَافِرًا يَبِيعُ دِينَهُ بِعَرَضٍ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا.

“Hasten to do good deeds; there will come temptations like patches of dark night; then a man will wake up a believer but by nightfall becomes a disbeliever; or be a believer in the evening and a disbeliever by morning; and he will sell his religion for a little of what the world has to offer.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

مَنْ خَافَ أَذْلَجَ وَمَنْ أَذْلَجَ بَلَغَ الْمَنْزِلَ أَلَا إِنَّ سِلْعَةَ اللَّهِ غَالِيَةً، أَلَا إِنَّ سِلْعَةَ اللَّهِ الْحَبَّةُ.

“Those who fear set out at nightfall; and those who set out at nightfall reach their destination. Most surely, the commodity that relates to Allah is precious! Most surely, the commodity of Allah is the Garden!”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

رَأْسُ الْحِكْمَةِ خَشْيَةُ اللَّهِ.

“The ultimate wisdom is to fear of Allah.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَا لَا يَعْنِيهِ.

“To avoid matters that do not concern one's person is part of being a good Muslim!”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, said,

دَعُ مَا يَرِيبُكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيبُكَ.

“Leave that which arouses your doubt for that which does not.”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him and his family, said,

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ.

“Not one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

إِنَّ مِمَّا أَدْرَكَ النَّاسُ مِنْ كَلَامِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُولَى إِذَا لَمْ تَسْتَحِ فَاصْنَعْ مَا شِئْتَ.

“One of the things which have come down to man from the sayings of the earlier prophets is, “If you have no shame do what you will!””

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَرَضَ فَرَائِضَ فَلَا تُضَيِّعُوهَا، وَحَدَّ حُدُودًا فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا، وَحَرَّمَ أَشْيَاءَ فَلَا تَنْتَهِكُوهَا وَسَكَتَ عَنْ أَشْيَاءَ رَحْمَةً لَكُمْ غَيْرَ نَسْيَانٍ فَلَا تَبْتَخَثُوا عَنْهَا.

“Allah has imposed obligations; therefore do not put them to waste! He has drawn limits; therefore do not transgress them! He has established prohibitions; so do not violate them! And He has kept silent about certain things out of compassion for you, not out of forgetfulness; so do not search for them!”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

مَنْ رَأَى مِنْكُمْ مُنْكَرًا فَلْيُغَيِّرْهُ بِيَدِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فِلِسَانِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِقَلْبِهِ وَذَلِكَ أَضْعَفُ الْإِيمَانِ.

“Whoever sees a reprehensible thing let him change it with his hand. If he cannot do that, then with his tongue; If he cannot do that then with his heart; and that is the weakest (degree) of faith.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يَكُونَ هَوَاهُ تَبَعًا لِمَا جِئْتُ بِهِ.

“None of you is a believer until his desire conforms to what I have brought.”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, said,

الْإِيمَانُ بِضْعٌ وَسَبْعُونَ شُعْبَةً، أَعْلَاهَا قَوْلُ: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَدْنَاهَا: إِمَاطَةُ الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ.

“Faith has seventy-odd branches, the highest of which is to say, “There is no God but the one true Allah” [*La ilaha illa'llah*], and the lowest is to remove a harmful thing from the road.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

مَا رَأَيْتُ مِثْلَ الْجَنَّةِ نَامَ طَالِبُهَا، وَمَا رَأَيْتُ مِثْلَ النَّارِ نَامَ هَارِبُهَا.

“I have seen nothing like the Garden, whose seekers would not sleep, or like the Fire, whose evaders too not sleep.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

حُقَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ بِالْمَكَارِهِ، وَحُقَّتِ النَّارُ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ.

“The Garden is surrounded with difficulties and deceptions, and the Fire is surrounded with pleasures.”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, said,

مَا مَلَأَ ابْنُ آدَمَ وَعَاءً شَرًّا مِنْ بَطْنِهِ، بِحَسَبِ ابْنِ آدَمَ لُقَيْمَاتٍ يُقْمَنُ صُلْبُهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا مَحَالَةَ، فَتُلْتُ لِبَطْنِهِ، وَتُلْتُ لِشَرَابِهِ، وَتُلْتُ لِنَفْسِهِ.

“Never does the son of Adam fill a worse vessel than his stomach. A few morsels to keep his back straight should suffice the son of Adam. But if he must, then let him give one third to his food, one third to his beverage, and one third to his breath.”

There is another hadith that stated,

كُلُوا فِي أَنْصَافِ الْبُطُونِ، وَعَوِّدُوا الْأَجْسَادَ مَا تَعْتَادُ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ جُزْءٌ مِنَ النَّبُوءَةِ.

Eat only to fill half the stomach, this is what the body is accustomed to, and it is part of the practice of the prophets.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, said,

ثَلَاثُ مُنْجِيَّاتٍ وَثَلَاثُ مُهْلِكَاتٍ: فَأَمَّا الثَّلَاثَةُ الْمُنْجِيَّاتُ فَخَشْيَةُ اللَّهِ فِي الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةُ، وَالْقَصْدُ فِي الْغِيِّ وَالْفَقْرُ، وَكَلِمَةُ الْعَدْلِ فِي الرِّضَا وَالْعُضْبِ وَأَمَّا الثَّلَاثَةُ الْمُهْلِكَاتُ فَشُحُّ مَطَاعٍ، وَهُوَى مُتَّبِعٍ، وَإِعْجَابُ الْمَرْءِ بِنَفْسِهِ.

“There are three things that save and three that ruin a man. As for the three that save him, they are to fear Allah secretly and openly, to be moderate in affluence and poverty, and to speak with justice whether it will please or angry others. As for the three that bring ruin a man, they are greed that one obeys, passion that one follows, and the admiration of a person for himself (and not for the sake of Allah).”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

سَبْعَةٌ يُظِلُّهُمْ اللَّهُ فِي ظِلِّهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ، إِمَامٌ عَادِلٌ وَشَابٌ نَشَأَ فِي عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، وَرَجُلٌ قَلْبُهُ مُعَلَّقٌ بِالْمَسَاجِدِ، وَرَجُلَانِ تَحَابَّا فِي اللَّهِ تَعَالَى اجْتَمَعَا عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَتَفَرَّقَا عَلَيْهِ، وَرَجُلٌ دَعَتْهُ امْرَأَةٌ ذَاتُ مَنْصِبٍ وَجَمَالٍ فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ. وَرَجُلٌ تَصَدَّقَ بِصَدَقَةٍ فَأَخْفَاهَا حَتَّى لَا تَعْلَمَ شِمَالُهُ مَا أَنْفَقَتْ يَمِينُهُ، وَرَجُلٌ ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ خَالِيًا فَفَاضَتْ عَيْنَاهُ.

“Seven will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the day when there will be no shade but His: a just leader; a young man who grew up in the worship of Allah, Mighty and Majestic is He; a man whose heart remains attached to the mosque; two men who loved each other for the sake of Allah the Exalted, meeting and separating thus; a man who was solicited by a woman of rank and beauty but who said, “I fear Allah!”; a man who gave alms and concealed them so that his left hand did not know what his right hand had spent; and a man who remembered Allah when alone and whose eyes overflowed with tears.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

كَأَنَّ الْمَوْتَ فِيهَا عَلَى غَيْرِنَا كُتِبَ، وَكَأَنَّ الْحَقَّ فِيهَا عَلَى غَيْرِنَا وَجَبَ، وَكَأَنَّ مَنْ نُشِيعُ مِنَ الْمَوْتِى سَفَرٌ عَنْ قَرِيبٍ إِلَيْنَا رَاجِعُونَ، نُبَوِّئُهُمْ أَجْدَانَهُمْ وَنَأْكُلُ ثَرَاتَهُمْ، كَأَنَّ مُحَلِّدُونَ بَعْدَهُمْ، قَدْ نَسِينَا كُلَّ مَوْعِظَةٍ وَأَمَّا كُلَّ جَائِحَةٍ.

“It is as if death had been decreed only on others, as if truth was an obligation only on others, as if the dead that we escort to their graves are on a journey from which they will soon return to us: we lay them in their graves, then spend what they have left behind as if we were to live eternally after them, forgetting all advice and feeling secure from all disaster.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ نَاطِقًا وَصَامِتًا فَأَمَّا النَّاطِقُ فَكِتَابُ اللَّهِ، وَأَمَّا الصَّامِتُ فَالْمَوْتُ.

“I have left two counselors among you, one that speaks and another that is silent. The one that speaks is the Book of God, and the silent one is death!”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

لَا تَزُولُ قَدَمَا عَبْدٍ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَتَّى يُسْأَلَ عَنْ خَمْسٍ: عَنْ عُمْرِهِ فِيمَا أَفْنَاهُ، وَعَنْ شَبَابِهِ فِيمَا أَبْلَاهُ، وَعَنْ مَالِهِ مِنْ أَيْنَ اكْتَسَبَهُ وَفِيمَا أَنْفَقَهُ، وَعَنْ عِلْمِهِ مَاذَا عَمِلَ فِيهِ

“The feet of a servant do not move on the Day of Rising until he has been asked about five things: his lifetime and how he exhausted it; his youth and how it was worn out; his wealth and from where he obtain it and how he spent it; and his knowledge and what he did with it.”

He, may blessings and peace be upon him said,

إِذَا حَدَّثَ فِي النَّاسِ تِسْعَةَ أَشْيَاءَ: كَانَ مَعَهَا تِسْعَةُ أَشْيَاءَ، إِذَا كَثُرَ الزَّيْنُ كَثُرَ مَوْتُ الْفَجَاءَةِ، وَإِذَا مَنَعَ الزَّكَاةَ مَنَعَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْقَطْرَ، وَإِذَا طَفَقُوا الْمِكْيَالَ أَخَذُوا بِالسِّنِينَ، وَإِذَا جَاؤُوا فِي الْحُكْمِ عَمَّهُمُ الظُّلْمُ وَالْعُدْوَانُ وَإِذَا نَقَضُوا الْعَهْدَ سَلَّطَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ عَدُوَّهُمْ، وَإِذَا تَرَكُوا الْأَمْرَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ اضْطَرَبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأُمُورُ وَإِذَا تَرَكُوا النَّهْيَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ مَلَكَهُمْ أَشْرَارُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَطَعُوا الْأَرْحَامَ جُعِلَتْ الْأَمْوَالُ بِأَيْدِي الْأَشْرَارِ، وَإِذَا ارْتَكَبُوا الْمُحَارِمَ طَرَفَتْهُمْ الْآفَاتُ.

“There are nine things which, when they occur among people, are accompanied by nine other things: When adultery becomes rife, sudden death becomes rife; when people withhold Zakat, Allah will withhold the rains; when they cheat in their weights, they will be

stricken with famine; when they judge unjustly, injustice and aggression will spread among them; when they break their pledges, Allah will let their enemy prevail over them; when they abandon exhorting to good, their affairs will become disturbed; when they abandon forbidding evil, the worst among them will become their rulers; when they neglect the ties of their kinship, their wealth will be given to the worst among them; when they commit sins, they will be stricken with afflictions.”

Ali, may Allah honor him said, “Were the veil to be removed I would not increase in certitude.” He also said, “Suppose that Allah were to forgive those who did wrong, would they not still have missed the rewards of those who did good deeds!” And he may Allah be please with him said, “Blessed are those who renounce the world and wish for the Hereafter. They are the people who use the earth as a rug, its dust as a bed, its water as perfume, and take Prayers and the Quran for their robe; thus they reject the world according to the practices of Isa, may peace be upon him.”

Zainal Abidin, Ali the son of Husain may Allah be pleased with them, said, “Allah has concealed three within three. He has concealed His good pleasure in His obedience; therefore despise no act of obedience lest His good pleasure be within it. And He has concealed His abhorrence in acts of rebellion against Him; therefore underestimate no act of rebellion lest His abhorrence be therein. And He has concealed His Friends in His creation; therefore despise none of His creatures, for he may be a Friend of Allah. And he may Allah be please with him said, “The weapon of the wicked is corrupt speech.”

His son Muhammad al-Baqir may Allah be please with him said, “I had a companion who was, in my eyes, very great. What made him such in my eyes was the insignificance of the world in his eyes.”

His son Ja'far al-Sadiq said, “Safety has become so rare that the way to it has become hidden; if it is in anything at all it will be in anonymity. If it is not in anonymity, it will be in divestment; if it is not in divestment, it will be in silence which is not like divestment. If it is not in silence, it will be in the words of the righteous predecessors. The

fortunate one is he who finds in himself freedom from preoccupation.”

Al-Hasan al-Basri, may Allah have mercy on him said, “Death has exposed the world and left no joy in it for any person of intelligence.” And he also said, “Beware of hoping for forgiveness without working for it. Such hopes have deceived some people until they departed from the world bankrupt.” And he also said, “Beware of these hopes, they are but the valleys of the fools.”

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, may Allah have mercy on him, once received a garment costing one thousand dirhams and said, “How beautiful it is; were it not for some roughness in it!” But after he became caliph, they would bring him a garment costing ten dirhams and he would say, “How beautiful it is; were it not for some softness in it.” Once he may Allah be please with him was mentioned by Ali bin Abi Talib, may Allah honor him when he was on the Mimbar with the verse,

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ.

“Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith.”¹

And as Allah the Exalted says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ

“Allah commands justice, the doing of good.”²

Similar how admirable is the saying of al-Sharif al-Radii in addressing Umar ibn Abdul Aziz,

“Son of Abdul Aziz! You were the eye to weep for an Umayyad, I would weep for you. You rescued us from insult and slander. If reward were possible, I would repay you.”

Abu Hazirn al-Madan, may Allah have mercy on him said, “That which has gone by of the world is a dream, while that which remains is no more than hopes.”

And he also said, “You never extend your hand toward

¹ Surah 59 Hashr Verse 10

² Surah 16 Nahl Verse 90

anything of the world but to find that some corrupt person has preceded you to it.”

When Malik ibn Dinar, may Allah have mercy on him went out of his house, he pulled the door closed with a piece of rope and said, “But for the dogs I would leave it open.” This was because it was empty of worldly things. A woman once stole his Quran and his blanket. He followed her calling, “You there! Do you have a son who can read? Do you have a husband who can read?” She answered, “No!” So he said, “Give me back the Quran and keep the blanket.”

Al-Fudayl ibn Iyad, may Allah have mercy on him said, “To abandon action because of other people is ostentation [*riya*’]; to act because of them is idolatry [*shirk*]; and sincerity is that Allah should save you from both.” And he also said, “Had the world been made of perishable gold and the Hereafter of permanent clay, we should have preferred permanent clay to perishable gold. What then when reality is the reverse, that is, the Hereafter is permanent Gold and the world is perishable clay?”

Ibrahim ibn Adham, may Allah have mercy on him said, “I once passed by a stone which bore the following legend: “Turn me over and learn a lesson.” I turned it over and found these words: “You do not practice what you know, so how can you ask for the knowledge of that which you do not know?” It was once said to him, “Meat has become expensive!” and he replied, “Cheapen it by abandoning it!” And he said, “Make your food pure, and it will do you no harm not to keep vigil at night nor to fast by day.”

A man once said to Dawud al-Ta’i may Allah have mercy on him, “Give me a religious advice!” He obliged and said, “Fast from the world, break your fast with the Hereafter, and flee from people as you would flee from a lion.”

Ma’ruf al-Karkhi may Allah have mercy on him once said, “I once passed by Ibn al-Sammak as he was counselling the people and heard him say, “The one who approaches Allah, Allah approaches him; the one who turns away from Allah, Allah turns away from him; and as for the man who does this only once in a while, Allah treats him

likewise.” I told my master Ali ibn Musa al-Reda about this, and he said, “What you have heard should suffice you as counsel.” So I left everything of the world’s preoccupations except the service of my teacher Ali ibn Musa al-Reda, may Allah be pleased with him.”

Al Sariyu al-Saqatiyu, may Allah have mercy on him said, “Alive is he who knows Allah the Exalted; astray is he that loves the world. The intelligent watch themselves, and the fools come and go in empty activities.”

Al-Junaid bn Muhammad, may Allah have mercy on him once said, “We did not take Sufism [*Tasauwuf*] from words and sayings, but from hunger, night vigils, leaving the worldly lives, and abstaining from familiar and likeable things.” When he was about to die, he was heard completing a recitation of the Quran and starting again from the beginning. They asked him, “In this state of yours will you still recite?” He replied, “Yes! And who is more in need than I when my scroll is being folded up?”

Bishr al-Hafi said, “He who honors the world is abased and disgraced on Judgement Day. But he who disdains it will then find an honor incomparable.”

Once, he was seen thinly dressed on an extremely cold day. When questioned about this he replied, “I remembered the poor in this cold, and that they are suffering. I have nothing to comfort them with, so I comfort them with myself.”

Al-Harith al-Muhasibi may Allah have mercy on him said, “The one who adorns his inward with vigilance and sincerity, Allah adorns his outward with striving and following the practice of the Prophetic [*sunnah*].”

Yahya ibn Mu’adh may Allah have mercy on him said, “I left the world because of its excessive toil, the swiftness with which it perishes, the scarcity of its wealth, and the villainy of its partners.”

Sahl al-Tusturi may Allah have mercy on him said, “There is no helper save Allah, no guide save the Messenger of Allah, no provision save being mindful of duties to Allah [*taqwa*] and no work save patience.”

Abu Said al-Kharraz may Allah have mercy on him said, “Anyone who thinks that through his effort he will arrive is tiring himself; and anyone who thinks that without effort he will arrive is indulging in wishful thinking.”

Abu alHasan al-Sha’rani may Allah have mercy on him said, “I once saw Mansur ibn Ammar, may Allah have mercy him in a dream. I asked him what Allah had done with him and he said, “He made me stand before Him and said, “You are Mansur ibn Ammar?” I said, “Yes O Lord!” Are you the one who strove to make people renounce the world while desiring it yourself?” “That was so, however I never once sat in company without beginning by praising You then invoking blessings on Your Prophet Muhammad, may blessings and peace be on him, then giving counsel to Your servants.” And Allah Exalted and Majestic is He said, “He has spoken the truth! Erect a chair for him that he may glorify Me in My Heaven among My angels as he has glorified Me in My earth among My servants.””

Once in a gathering, it was related that a young servant passed by Mansur ibn ‘Ammar may Allah have mercy on him and heard him say, “I shall pray four prayers for the one who will give this poor man four dirhams.” The boy had four dirhams which his master, a merchant, had given him to buy certain things. He gave them to the poor man and obtained his four prayers. He then returned empty handed to his master who asked him, “What were the four prayers?” And he said, “That Allah the Exalted should free me from slavery.” So the man set him free. He continued, “That Allah should bestow money in replacement of that which I gave away.” His master answered, “I will give you four thousand dirhams. What about the third one?” He replied, “That Allah grant me and you repentance.” “I repent to Allah,” cried the merchant and “What about the fourth?” “That Allah forgives me, you, the one who reminded us, and all others.” He said, “As for this one it is not in my power to confer.” That same night the man beheld in his sleep Allah the True Magnificent and Majestic is He, said to him, “Will I fail to do what is Mine when you have done what is yours? I forgive you, the boy, the one who reminded you; and the people!”

Transcendent is Allah the Exalted! How generous, magnanimous, great, and compassionate is He! The Beneficent, there is no God but Him; to Him is the final end.

Let this be the last of what Allah the Exalted has rendered easy for us to record in this book. Allah is the Guide to what is true and appropriate, and unto Him is the return. May Allah bless and grant peace to His servant and Messenger, to whom He entrusted His revelation, our master Muhammad, who was sent as a Mercy to the Worlds and a Seal to the prophets, and to his pure and fragrant offspring, his well-guided and guiding Companions, and those who follow them with excellence until the Day of Reckoning. Praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ، عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ.

“Say (O Muhammad), “This is my way: I do invite unto Allah, on evidence clear as the seeing with one’s eyes, I and whoever follows me. Glory to Allah! and never will I join gods with Allah!”¹

This dictation ended on the morning of Thursday, the twelfth of Safar in the year 1130 of the Emigration of the Prophet, upon whom be the best of blessings and peace.

¹ Surah 12 Yusuf Verse 108

We had stopped dictating these chapters some time ago for no obvious reason other than our wish to add others to them that had affinity and harmony with them. A long time elapsed and they remained incomplete. However, people copied them, and so we became determined to complete them by the grace of Allah, beginning with the chapter on “Rectitude.” The late chapters are not entirely complementary to the earlier ones, but they contain important benefits derived from good sources for those who reflect and possess fairness and good judgment. We are, as ever, cognizant of the favor of Allah, the blessings of the Messenger of Allah may blessings and peace be on him and his family, and the blessings of our righteous predecessors to whom we claim attachment and whose way we wish to follow and emulate. May Allah grant us this, as well as to our parents, children, loved ones, companions, and all Muslims, and may He make our lives ends in excellence, wellbeing, protection, and safety from all temptations, whether outward or inward.

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

“It is as Allah wishes for there is no power but with Allah!”¹

حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

“Allah suffice, and He is the best disposer of affairs.”²

غُفْرَانِكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

“(We seek) Your forgiveness, our Lord!”

“To You is the end of all journeys.”³

¹ Surah 18 Al Kahfi Verse 39

² Surah 3 Ala Imran Verse 173

³ Surah 2 Al Baqara Verse 285

هَذِهِ الْقَصِيدَةُ الْإِمَامِ الْحَدَادِ الْمَشْهُورَةُ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ

This is one of the famous qasidah of the Imam, may Allah be pleased with him,

وَقَالَ: مَا وَاطَبَ صَادِقٌ عَلَى قَرَاءَتِهَا عِنْدَ وَفُوعِهِ فِي شِدَّةٍ إِلَّا وَيُدْرِكُهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِالْإِغَانَةِ

He said that whoever recite it as part of his/her routine, whenever he face a difficult problem inevitably there will be Assistance from Allah the Exalted.

(١) قَدْ كَفَانِي عِلْمُ رَبِّي مِنْ سُؤَالِي وَاخْتِيَارِي

1. It is more then suffice and satisfying for me that My Lord knows all my questions and choices.

(٢) فُدْعَائِي وَابْتِهَالِي شَاهِدٌ لِي بِافْتِقَارِي

2. So let whatever I ask for and You granted be a witness of my weakness and lowly humble state (within Your Magnificent Status).

(٣) فَلِهَذَا السِّرِّ أَدْعُو فِي يَسَارِي وَعَسَارِي

3. Then it is this secrets state that I seek from You in good times and in times of hardship.

(٤) أَنَا عَبْدٌ صَارَ فَخْرِي ضِمْنَنَ فَقْرِي وَاضْطِرَارِي

4. For I am the servant whom is screeching proudly at the fact that I know I am such a pitiful soul whom is badly in needs (of You).

(٥) قَدْ كَفَانِي عِلْمُ رَبِّي مِنْ سُؤَالِي وَاخْتِيَارِي

5. It is more then suffice and satisfying for me that My Lord knows of all y questions and choices.

(٦) يَا إِلَهِي وَمَلِكِي أَنْتَ تَعْلَمُ كَيْفَ حَالِي

6. O my Lord and King, You know what is my situation.

(٧) وَبِمَا قَدْ حَلَّ قَلْبِي مِنْ هُمُومٍ وَاشْتِغَالٍ

7. And whatever the state of my heart, from its attempts and occupation.

(٨) فَتَنَادِرْكَنِي بِلُطْفٍ مِنْكَ يَا مَوْلَى الْمَوَالِي

8. Whatever that overwhelm me let it be gentleness from You, my Lord

(٩) يَا كَرِيمَ الْوَجْهِ غُثْنِي قَبْلَ أَنْ يَفْتَنِيَ اصْطِبَارِي

9. O the Kindest of Face help me before it languish my forebearance.

(١٠) قَدْ كَفَانِي عِلْمُ رَبِّي مِنْ سُؤَالِي وَاخْتِيَارِي

10. It suffices me that my Lord knows all my questions and choices

- (١١) يَا سَرِيعَ الْعَوْتِ عَوْتًا مِنْكَ يُدْرِكُنِي سَرِيعًا
11. O Quick Assistant provide help from You to reach me quickly.
- (١٢) يَهْرُمُ الْعُسْرُ وَيَأْتِي بِالَّذِي أَرْجُو جَمِيعًا
12. That overcome the hardship and brings to me what I hope for.
- (١٣) يَا قَرِيبًا يَا مُحِيبًا يَا عَلِيمًا يَا سَمِيعًا
13. O the Close One, the Grantor, O the Omniscient, the Listener.
- (١٤) قَدْ تَحَقَّقْتُ بِعَجْزِي وَخُضُوعِي وَأَنْكِسَارِي
14. Truly I know for certain of my inadequacy, and subservience and my inadequacies.
- (١٥) قَدْ كَفَانِي عِلْمُ رَبِّي مِنْ سُؤَالِي وَاخْتِيَارِي
15. It suffices me that Allah knows of my questions and choices
- (١٦) لَمْ أَزَلْ بِالْبَابِ وَقِفٌ فَأَرْحَمَنَّ رَبِّي وَفُؤُونِي
16. My sins will not eradicate or end except when the mercy of my Lord engulf me.
- (١٧) وَبَوَادِي الْفَضْلِ عَاكِفٌ فَأَدِمْ رَبِّي عُكُوفِي
17. Favour of the wilderness is in seclusion, my Lord eternalise my solisitude
- (١٨) وَلِحُسْنِ الظَّنِّ لَأَرْمَ فَهَوَّ خَلِّي وَخَلِيفِي
18. And to have good thoughts all the time and vacate my viodness and allied
- (١٩) وَأُنَيْسِي وَجَلِيسِي طَوَّلَ لَيْلِي وَنَهَارِي
19. My social life is to sit long periods in meditation in the day and night
- (٢٠) قَدْ كَفَانِي عِلْمُ رَبِّي مِنْ سُؤَالِي وَاخْتِيَارِي
20. It suffices me that Allah knows of my questions and choices
- (٢١) حَاجَةٌ فِي النَّفْسِ يَا رَبِّ فَاقْضِهَا يَا حَيَّرَ قَاضِي
21. O Lord, the intentions is the self so grant it O the Best of Grantor.
- (٢٢) وَأَرْخِ سِرِّي وَقَلْبِي مِنْ لَطَاهَا وَالشُّوَاطِ
22. And comfort my secrets and heart from its rousing and flame.
- (٢٣) فِي سُرُورٍ وَحُبُورٍ وَإِذَا مَا كُنْتُ رَاضِي
23. In the happiness and joyfulness of those which You are not please with.
- (٢٤) فَالْهَنَاءُ وَالْبَسْطُ حَالِي وَشِعَارِي وَدَثَارِي
24. Then happiness and prosperity is my state, condition and dress.
- (٢٥) قَدْ كَفَانِي عِلْمُ رَبِّي مِنْ سُؤَالِي وَاخْتِيَارِي
25. It suffices me that Allah knows of my questions and choices.